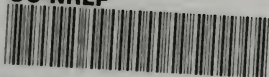


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“PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

IN

HEAVENLY PLACES.”

“PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS

IN

HEAVENLY PLACES.”

BY

CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

||

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,



REV. EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

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TO THE INTENT THAT NOW UNTO THE PRINCIPALITIES
AND POWERS IN HEAVENLY PLACES MIGHT BE KNOWN
BY THE CHURCH THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD.—
Ephes. iii. 10.

WE WRESTLE NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, BUT
AGAINST PRINCIPALITIES, AGAINST POWERS, AGAINST
THE RULERS OF THE DARKNESS OF THIS WORLD,
AGAINST SPIRITUAL WICKEDNESS IN HIGH PLACES.—
Ephes. vi. 12.

HAVING SPOILED PRINCIPALITIES AND POWERS, HE MADE
A SHOW OF THEM OPENLY, TRIUMPHING OVER THEM.
—Colossians ii. 15.

CONTENTS.

PART I.

OF EVIL SPIRITS.

	PAGE
SECTION I.—Their Existence and Character, . .	13
II.—The Power and Employment of Evil Spirits,	22
III.—Satanic Daring,	34
IV.—Satanic Cunning,	46
V.—Satanic Cruelty,	58
VI.—Satanic Activity,	72
VII.—Satanic Knowledge,	81
VIII.—The Limit of Satanic Power, . .	89
IX.—Satanic Wrath as the end draws nigh,	102
X.—The Doom of Satan and his Angels,	119

PART II.

OF THE HOLY ANGELS.

	PAGE
SECTION I.—Their Existence and Character, .	129
II.—Angelic Knowledge and Power, .	136
III.—Angelic Obedience,	150
IV.—Angelic Ministry,	162
V.—Angelic Sympathy,	180
VI.—Angelic Interest in the Jewish People, .	200
VII.—Christ Seen of Angels,	217
VIII.—The Apostles a Spectacle to Angels, .	238
IX.—Angelic Ministrations in the last days, .	250
X.—Angelic Triumph,	265

CONCLUSION.

CHRIST the King of Angels,	282
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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

I HAVE great pleasure in complying with a request to prefix a few introductory words to this work. I think it scriptural, seasonable, and practical. No part of divine truth can be neglected without spiritual loss, and it is too evident that the deep and mysterious doctrine of Revelation respecting evil spirits and good angels, has been far too much disregarded in our age. This has arisen, on the one hand, from the wide spread of infidel principles, and on the other from the unscriptural, idolatrous, extravagant attention paid to this subject in the Church of Rome, in which the good angels are worshiped, and the evil spirits brought forward to foster delusions. But we gain no solid victory over Popery, by omitting the truths which have been corrupted and abused. Our duty is rather to take forth

the precious from the vile, and hold fast the simple and plain truth revealed for us and our children ; thus shall we be as God's mouth to his people. Jer. xv. 10.

The friend who wrote this work has been careful not to go beyond the divine record, and to rest everything here stated on her own personal investigation of the words of the Most High. The reader will find it an edifying and appropriate work, bringing out plainly and perspicuously the scriptural testimony on the subject on which it treats ; and I believe it to be specially suited to meet a want actually existing in the Church of Christ at this time.

There is an advantage in some respects in one mind, simply drawing its sentiments and conclusions from the Scriptures only, without the aid of any other mind ; and this advantage the reader will have in this work. It gives not that fulness of truth which the communion of many minds gives, but we obtain by it more of the simplicity and plainness of the Scripture testimony.

Looking at the signs of the times, and the long neglect and unnatural denial of all angelic ministration or spiritual influence, and at the express predictions of

false Christs and false prophets, *who shall show signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they should deceive the very elect*, and that when men receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved, *for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie*, I cannot but think there is a painful prospect of a sudden recoil and religious revulsion from the present unbelief and misbelief, to an unnatural and undistinguishing CREDULITY, when Anti-Christ shall appear in his latest form, “with signs and lying wonders.” I would therefore leave an earnest caution on the minds of my readers—*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God.* The Scriptures have forewarned us beforehand, that we may not be *led away with the error of the wicked and fall from our own steadfastness.*

My hope is that this work may tend much to increase the watchfulness, call forth the prayers, strengthen the faith, enliven the hopes, and cheer the hearts of Christians, contending with our mighty spiritual enemies, and succoured by those yet mightier angels who are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation. In the increasing intenseness of the conflict, we shall proba-

bly soon more urgently need every aid of this kind. May it please God thus to assist many in attaining that final victory which is sure to every faithful follower of Christ, for "He that is in us is stronger than he that is in the world."

EDWARD BICKERSTETH.

Watton Herts, July 19, 1842.



PART I

OF EVIL SPIRITS.

SECTION I.—THEIR EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER.

THE eternal power and godhead of the Most High, are, as St. Paul tells us, invisible things, yet clearly seen and to be understood even of the heathen, by those things which he hath made. Rom. i. 20. The order and harmony of creation, the wonderful manner in which all things are upheld, preserved, perpetuated, or reproduced, appeal to the natural reason and conscience of man, bespeaking some mighty, creative, over-ruling hand, directed by a wisdom and knowledge to which no mortal may attain. And this recognition is all but universal. However false, however distorted, however debased by the most wretched folly, superstition and crime, we find the principle of Deism in some form established throughout the world.

But beyond this, man cannot go; he sees that God is powerful, and if the desperate wickedness of his own

heart did not blind it, he must also perceive that God is good ; giving us rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness, clothing the earth with refreshing verdure ; decking it with myriads of glowing flowers ; bestowing on the birds their soft and graceful plumage, bright in lovely dyes, and teaching them to breathe forth music from their cheerful throats : causing the moon to walk in brightness, the stars to spangle heaven, and peopling even the little brooks that run among the hills with unnumbered forms of beauty that sport in the pure element. So far, man may recognise God, may love, fear, and praise him.

But beyond this we have no means of penetrating ; our bodily organs appear to be the sole medium of communication with what exists. What we can see, hear, feel, smell, or taste, is matter of observance, affording evidence on which the mind may rely, and from it we may reason or conjecture to any extent, but can *know* nothing to bring us acquainted with what lies beyond the range of our senses, we need a special revelation from Him who governs all, and this revelation we possess. Between the two covers of a book that a child may grasp, we find all that is needful or profitable for us to know of the nature, attribute, and works of the Almighty, of his power in creation, his love in redemption, his past dealings with the world, and his future purposes respecting it. By the comparatively dim twilight of his works we may feel after, and haply find him, as the all-presiding governor of the world which he has made : in the bright blaze of his word we behold him distinctly ; and not only Him, but a race of

intermediate beings, different from ourselves in that they are not burdened with flesh, possessed of faculties and powers that give them a vast advantage over us, and deeply interested, busily employed about us who are naturally wholly regardless, even when not wholly ignorant concerning them.

Of these mysterious beings we know the number is immensely great; and that they are divided into two classes: the "elect angels," "holy angels," who are God's obedient ministers and do his pleasure; and "the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation," (Jude 6,) who are rebels against God, and implacable enemies to man. These last are marshalled under one superior chief, who directs their operations, and maintains, with their assistance, a kingdom upon earth, directly opposed to the government of Christ the rightful King. To support by every possible means, to extend and to strengthen this usurped dominion, to seduce all whom he can, to terrify others, and to thwart, harass, and distress every child of God while sojourning here, is the object of the adversary. His very name, Satan, expresses it; and the superior power which as a spirit he possesses, becomes effectual in carrying out his most malevolent designs, whenever the omnipotence of God does not interpose to restrain it.

But assertion, on a subject of such tremendous moment to every individual of the human race, will not suffice: we must have proof—such proof as God alone can afford us means of obtaining; and which where it exists he must also enable us to perceive, for the policy

of Satan is wholly opposed to the inquiry. There is nothing he dreads so much as our being "not ignorant of his devices," because he knows that where it is revealed to us, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in high places." Eph. vi. 12. In the preceding verse we are also told of a sure defence, and exhorted "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil." And despite the express declarations of God's word, despite its reiterated warnings, despite even our own sore personal experience of his craft and subtlety, we are prone to overlook not only such testimony to his continual activity and abundant means of warning against us, but the very fact of his existence, so far as it concerns the daily experience, collectively and individually, of the Church of Christ.

Strange as this may sound, it is undeniable: we cannot marvel that where Satan, "the god of this world, hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them," (2 Cor. iv. 4,) he should have taken care also to blind them to his own devices; that he should have stealthily thrown the bandage across their eyes from behind, so that they know not the hand which performed the operation, not even that such operation is performed; but it is wonderful that he can prevail upon Christian people to banish his name, as they generally do, from their daily converse, and Christian pastors to make only, now and

then, a slight incidental reference to it in the pulpit ; and in these days, too, while in every department of our households, in every street of our cities, in Church and State, in cottage and palace, at home and abroad, he is incessantly manifesting his hateful presence, perplexing, seducing, embroiling, dismaying, uprooting, and disorganizing, till the whole framework of society is loosened, and ready upon the first shock to crumble about us.

It cannot be unseasonable, at any period, far less at this juncture, to draw the attention of Christians to a point which God has seen fit to represent as of the most stirring, vital importance to them. The warning needs to be often sounded, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." 1 Peter v. 8. But in treating of a matter so exceedingly solemn and awful, care must be taken not to run into the opposite danger of saying too much. We must "not go beyond the word of the Lord to speak more nor less." Great mischief has been done, and by great men too, by indulging imagination and building unreal fabrics on the solid foundation of the revealed fact. Scripture alone must speak, in declaring the existence, personality, characters, offices, and positive actings of those spiritual creatures, which constantly surround us, beginning with Satan and his angels. May HE, who by death destroyed him that had the power of death ; He, the seed of the woman, who came to bruise the serpent's head ; He, who led captivity captive, and who will bruise Satan under our feet shortly : may He, even the

Lord Jesus Christ, bless this humble attempt, preserving both the writer and the reader from all presumptuous sin !

Before proceeding to examine the truth concerning Satan, we must notice the false impressions current both as to his person and employment. We are taught from the nursery to regard him as a hideous, disgusting, and almost ludicrously contemptible object. A black, mis-shapen, half-human body, with limbs and other appendages belonging to various classes of animals, an excessively frightful, grinning face ; and, in short, a preposterous compound of all that is ugly and incongruous, supply the general idea of the " Prince of this world." This fabulous image bears the marks of his own creation, for it is calculated to throw us off our guard by masking his real importance, so that we grow up ashamed of having once been frightened by these pictures of the devil, and count it a mark of matured reason to laugh at the hobgoblin of our childhood. His name, too, is linked with mean and ridiculous associations ; it is denounced as a vulgarism, and when plainly uttered in conversation with reference to his works, a smile of levity, if not a grave reproof, usually awaits the offender. A variety of nicknames have been applied to him, the substitution of which, for his scriptural title, is considered as showing greater respect for the auditors, and greater refinement in the speaker ; and he has been so identified with the most flippant, most trifling or profane forms of speech, even among polished gentlemen, that one of the hardest tasks the awakened Christian has to encounter is, to disconnect

the name of the devil from such associations, and to dissuade others so offending.

As regards his works, a still more dangerous mistake seems to prevail: he is looked on by the professing world in general as little more than a chimerical personage; one who, when our Lord was on earth, proved busy, and troublesome to him, but who is mostly in hell, tormenting such as he has got into his power, and rarely, if ever, interfering with the course of this world. Sometimes the most petty annoyances and vexatious little mistakes are referred to his mischievous arrangements, but more through momentary petulance than any sober conviction; at other times he is represented as presiding where very extensive injury is done, perhaps directing the campaigns of a Napoleon, or baffling some scheme of universal philanthropy. But to regard him as systematically busying himself in the concerns of individuals, more particularly as influencing, by his artful suggestion, their words and deeds, is looked on as most childish and superstitious. Nay, even among spiritual persons there is a lurking unbelief on this subject, which gives the enemy many an advantage over them. They are loth to believe that when engaged in promoting a good work, Satan is at their right hand resisting them: that, by his whispered suggestions, their humility is often depressed into cowardice, their zeal quickened to rashness, their confidence urged on to presumption, and their prudence chilled with unbelief. In whatsoever quality the Lord has enabled them to excel, that very excellence Satan will weave a snare for their feet; and the

snare once laid, he has abundant agencies at work to draw, or drive them into it. Theoretically, perhaps, this is not denied, but point out a living instance of such delusion, and you are presently reprov'd or frowned into silence.

The following direct testimonies from the scriptures to the existence and character of evil spirits, of whom one distinct chief or leader controls a number of subordinate devils, will establish our first point:—

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Rev. xii. 9.

“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” John viii. 44.

“But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.” Luke xi. 15.

“If Satan be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub.” v. 18.

“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble.” James ii. 19.

“He said unto him, come out of the man, thou unclean spirit; and he asked him, what is thy name; and he answered, saying, my name is Legion; for we are many.” Mark v. 8, 9.

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt. xxv. 41.

“God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell.” 2 Peter ii. 4.

These form but a small portion of the inspired declarations which might be adduced under this head, yet they suffice to place the fact beyond a cavil, and our next step is to ascertain the extent of power possessed by Satan; and the habitual employment of the infernal hosts.

SECTION II.—THE POWER AND EMPLOYMENT OF
EVIL SPIRITS.

ALWAYS bearing in mind that our discoveries of things unseen must be limited by the plain declarations of God's word, we shall find it very difficult to fix the precise bounds of Satan's power and authority. That he possesses vast influence over man in his fallen state is very plain. Our Lord repeatedly calls him "the prince of this world." "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out." John xii. 31. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." xiv. 30. "The prince of this world is judged." xvi. 11. St. Paul speaks of him as "the god of this world." 2 Cor. iv. 4 ; and as "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." Eph. ii. 2. Considering how deliberately our first parents cast off their allegiance to God at the bidding of Satan, and by so doing, virtually transferred it to him, we may suppose his acquired dominion to be exceedingly great : inasmuch that when earth's rightful Lord first came, in great humility, to make reconciliation for that iniquity of his creature, man, Satan, exhibiting all the kingdoms of the world, could utter that fearful boast, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them : for that is delivered unto me ; and to whomsoever I will, I give it." Luke iv. 6. His triumphant vaunt indeed was of short duration ; for He, whom he dared to tempt, speedily cast him out of his earthly possessions,

and stripped him too, of a more terrible prerogative : for the Son of God became partaker of flesh and blood, “that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Heb. ii. 14, 15.

But beyond this, there is something that we cannot fathom : Satan is represented to us occasionally in situations far higher than a mere ruler of all the kingdoms of our earth could aspire to. Glimpses of a mysterious freedom of access to heavenly places are now and then afforded us ; and though men have undertaken to explain away by a system of types and figures what our enfeebled intellect cannot grasp, still we have the plain declarations of God’s word, which it would be our higher wisdom to receive in its obvious meaning ; and where we cannot comprehend, to lay our mouths in the dust, and silently adore.

The first of these instances occurs in the history of Job ; where it is said, “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, whence comest thou ? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, “From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.” Job i. 6, 7, and ii. 1, 2. This occurs twice. Again, Zechariah says, “And he shewed me, Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan ; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem

rebuke thee : is not this a brand plucked out of the fire !” Zech. iii. 1, 2. Perfectly consistent with these views is the language of the Apocalypse ; in a passage bearing so emphatically on our subject, that it must be given entire. “ And there was war in heaven : Michael and his angels fought against the dragon ; and the dragon fought, and his angels ; and prevailed not : neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world : he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ : *for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before God, day and night.* And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony ; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Wo to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea ; for the Devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.” Rev. xii. 7—12. Whatever, and whenever this casting out may be, it does not appear to have taken place in Paul’s time ; for in writing to the Ephesians, he says, “ We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places.” Eph. vi. 12. So reads the margin of our authorized version ; and Wiclif, in 1380, translates it, “ Agens

spiritual thingis of wickednesse in hewinli, thingis.” The Geneva version, 1557, has it, “Against spiritual wickednesses which are above;” and the Rhenish, 1582, “Against the spirituals of wickedness in the celestials.” In this, as in other instances, a growing dimness of vision on our mysterious and awful subject, has perhaps biased both translators and commentators, to put a gloss on what they cannot easily reconcile with their established systems. There is yet another very remarkable passage belonging to this head. In the book of Daniel, we find a heavenly instructor coming to show the prophet what shall befall his people, the Jews, in the latter days, who thus expresses himself: “The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me.” Dan. x. 13. And again he says, “Now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, the prince of Grecia shall come....and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.” Dan. x. 20, 21. It is not to be supposed that mere mortal kings were thus enabled to resist angels: we can but understand it of a certain authority exercised by these wicked spirits, these principalities, and powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, over nations that, in the practice of idolatrous abominations sacrificed unto devils, as the Apostle declares. We build no theory on these extraordinary declarations of the Most High: we merely point them out, and endeavour to show how they harmonize with other parts of the same immutable word.

Micaiah's vision is also observable. When adjured by the king to declare the truth of what the Lord had revealed concerning his projected enterprize, he thus disclosed it:—"I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him, on his right hand and on his left. And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Where-with? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth and do so." 1 Kings xxii. 19—22. This is repeated with scarcely any verbal variation in 2 Chron. xviii. 18—21. We cannot suppose the prophet of the Lord was at liberty to invent a fiction concerning the inhabitants of heaven; more especially as his warning was exactly fulfilled: neither can we reasonably suppose that a holy angel would volunteer to become a lying spirit, to mislead a sinner to his final ruin. The doom of Ahab had long been fixed: dogs were to lick his blood in the place where the innocent blood of the murdered Naboth had flowed; and his obstinate determination of going up to battle to Ramoth Gilead was the means of its fulfilment. Still he was warned: the conscientious Jehosaphat would not be satisfied unless a true prophet of the Lord was inquired of, after the encouragement given by Ahab's lying flatteries: and the whole device was then laid

bare, though the wicked king rejected the merciful intimation, and committing the faithful messenger to prison, rushed open-eyed upon his own destruction.

One more instance of Satanic interference in matters far above our level, may be adduced. The Apostle Jude, when denouncing those who "speak evil of dignities," adds, "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, but durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." Jude 9. Some indeed, identify this passage with that already cited from Zechariah, explaining it of the Jewish polity, or Mosaic law; and would therefore object against our advancing it as on additional testimony; but for such identification we can see no warrant. It would rather seem to refer to the fact, that the Lord so hid the actual human body of Moses, that "No man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day." Deut. xxxiv. 6.

These occasional glimpses of the invisible world are exceedingly awful: instead of regarding the adversary as a contemptible being, we can scarcely overrate his importance. Possessed of a power that we cannot rightly estimate, and filled with a malignity the most direful and implacable, he is not a solitary individual waging alone the war of rebellion and ruin: he has hosts unnumbered at command, as we have already shown; and doubtless he knows too well the value of order and subordination not to avail himself, as a skilful general, of his whole disposable force. What, then, is his employment, and to what object does he bend these superhuman energies and mighty means? The

answer may be found in any part of the Bible—we trace him by his operations, where he is not actually named ; and we know that so far as it concerns us, all may be summed up in three words, Hostility to man. He sought to deface the work of creation, in its bright morning prime ; and to a sad extent he succeeded : the work of redemption was undertaken, through the tender mercies of God, to repair that deadly breach ; and to resist it is the perpetual aim of Satan and his angels. Alike to him is the task to impede a great national movement towards Christ, and to lure a little child from the way of righteousness. In either case he puts forth his subtle power, and never loses sight of the object. Foreknowledge he does not possess : that is the prerogative of Deity alone ; but his calculations must be wonderfully accurate, considering that to the high angelic faculties of his nature, he adds the experience of some six thousand years of intimate concern in the affairs of men : and a perfect acquaintance with all knowledge and all mysteries, attainable by created intelligence. Before him are spread out all the phenomena of nature : the stars in their course, the ocean in its depths, the earth in all her hidden recesses, and all the complicated operations of her vast elemental laboratory, are visible to him. Long ere the shadow of a cloud encroaches on the unruffled sky bounded by our horizon, he perceives the coming storm, and prepares to seize such victims as he hopes may be delivered to him during the terrible convulsions. While all above is peace and serenity, he watches the internal combustion, and gloats over

the slumbering city about to be inundated with a flood of burning lava, or swallowed in the yawning chasms of this quaking earth. He looks into man's wonderful frame, and with a practised skill that no refinement of mortal art can attain to, marks the seeds of incipient disease, as they take root, and tend, perhaps unsuspected by the heedless individual, to the harvest of death—too often, alas! a harvest of wrath and ruin. Omnipresence is not his ; but motion quicker than our thoughts he can no doubt command ; and with an army of zealous followers, so well trained to execute his behests, he may leave it in their hands to work out some deep laid schemes of his devising in one quarter, while he speeds to the uttermost parts of the earth to pursue the same employment, perhaps in a distinct form ; perhaps so as to harmonize with, and to help forward the preceding mischief.

In order rightly to estimate the peril that we are in from this tremendous enemy, we must consider first, that all are sinners, condemned by the law of God ; “that without shedding of blood there is no remission,” and that, therefore, each individual believer may and must say of Christ, He loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. Christ will never overlook, or be indifferent to any soul for which he shed his precious blood : in their final salvation he sees the travail of his own soul, and is satisfied : and we have no lack of evidence that to wrest a single human being from the hand of the Saviour is an enterprise, however hopeless, in which Satan is content to embark all his energies ; and to put into motion all the vast machinery placed at his disposal. He desires

to have them that he may sift them as wheat ; yet to judge by the language of many excellent people, it would seem as though they considered their own corrupt nature and evil tendencies as the only hindrance in the heavenly race. This is a dangerous mistake : the Bible shows us in a most impressive manner how our adversary works upon that nature which he first prevailed to corrupt. David, full of ease and abundance, meditates on the extent and stability of his wide kingdom, and Satan takes advantage of it to suggest an act that he knew would be highly displeasing to the Lord, and probably bring a judgment on the nation. "Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." 1 Chron. xxi. 1. Even Joab, the most godless, unscrupulous man, and at the same time the most devoted subject and zealous patriot, saw the danger of this foolish act, and remonstrated against it. But the Devil had possessed the king's mind with a fancy in which he would not submit to be crossed, and the consequence was a destroying visitation on the land. Job was pious and prosperous,—the enemy attributed his godliness to his gains, and obtained leave to try him by heavy losses, calamities, and bodily sufferings ; then stirred up his wife to counsel blasphemy and suicide, and failing of that, instigated his friends to tax him with hypocrisy, and to represent these afflictions as an evident judgment from God, sent to brand him in the sight of the world as a gross though secret transgressor. Of all his infernal devices this is one of the worst, and by no means unfrequent. Satan first, by the divine permission, afflicts

a child of God, and then works on the pride, the rashness, the folly of some friend to pour corrosive acids into the wound where the softest oil of Christian sympathy and love ought rather to trickle down. The operator sees a cause and a need-be, for his friend's grievance far removed from those which the Lord saw when he smote : and taking this phantom of Satan's conjuring up for a reality, proceeds to do the arch-fiend's bidding by helping forward the affliction in a clumsy attempt to deal wisely with it. Thus he tormented Job, by means of his three friends, whom he also exposed to the Lord's severe displeasure by provoking them to such presumptuous sin ; while Job, whose real fault was unrenewed blindness to the corruption of his nature, reaped a two-fold temporal, and a ten thousand-fold spiritual blessing from what the Devil hoped to turn to his destruction. Judas was of a covetous disposition, and would have been a thief whenever he had opportunity ; but Satan marked him out for the deepest crime that it was possible for man to perpetrate once throughout all eternity. "Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot : " (Luke xxii. 3.) What an awful expression is that ! the chief adversary of God and man became for a time incarnate to oppose, and by opposing to accomplish, the great object of the Lord Jehovah in coming down to earth. He pervaded with his diabolical influence the mind and spirit of his willing victim, and led him on from the mere indulgence of avaricious thoughts to the terrible transgression for which no name can be found ; then left him to despair, to suicide, and to hell. Ananias and Sapphira

were doubly covetous: of lucre and of fame; they wanted both to keep their money, and to obtain applause for sacrificing it to the public good. Of this Satan took advantage to fill their hearts with a lie, by which they might hope to accomplish the desired end. But it was to the Holy Ghost that the lie was told, and instantaneous death was the penalty of seeking either to deceive the Lord, or to make Him connive at their guilt.

These instances exhibit the manner of Satan's working, where, but for what is revealed, we might suppose no such agency had existed. It was needful that Eve should be tempted from without, since the image of God yet remained within, and her heart, still holy and obedient, would not have suggested a departure from the path of His commandments. But the idea of numbering Israel—taking a census—in time of peace, and under every favourable circumstance, appears so natural that we probably should not search beyond the king's desire to know the extent of Israel's population, had not the Holy Spirit expressly told us who provoked him to it. In like manner Job's calamities might be referred to the predatory habits of his Arab neighbours, to the sudden storms and blasts of the desert, and to the bodily effects often produced by excessive mental suffering; while the erroneous view taken by his three friends was perfectly consistent with those frequently formed by ourselves, concerning others, when we should be loth to imagine that the Devil was prompting us. Judas might have been supposed to perpetrate his unparalleled crime under the impression that

his Master would, as he had more than once before done, deliver himself by a miracle from the hands into which he was about to sell him : and Ananias with his wife, might have arranged their plan under the impulse of natural vanity, combined with love of money. Yet in all these cases we are distinctly told that Satan himself was present to instigate and direct ; and many a recollection of our own past lives, now perhaps painful and self-condemnatory, would wring our hearts with anguish and horror if we knew how far the great adversary was concerned in them, and to what extent the will of God was resisted, the cause of Christ injured, and the Holy Ghost grieved, while evil spirits looked on rejoicing. We “give place to the Devil” daily ; and nothing more effectually helps him to lead us into this breach of a positive command, than our readiness to forget his continual presence, either personally or by his active ministers ; and perhaps to leave out of sight the fact of his very existence.

III.

SATANIC DARING.

THE truth being established that there exists a company of evil spirits, continually employed in resisting the power of God, and stirring up his creatures to rebel against his authority, it is not to be expected that in every instance cited as illustrating this truth, precise mention by name should be made of those who are clearly exhibited in that work. Very many cases may be adduced where such mention is distinctly made ; and in tracing others to the same source, we must bear in mind the apostolic warning, " Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man ; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed." James i. 13, 14. The plan, therefore, of Satan is to watch the indications of our prevailing corruptions, and to provide us with opportunities of gratifying them, that lust when it hath conceived may the more readily bring forth the sin which, as the enemy well knows, will, when it is finished, bring forth death.

Nor is it to the evil passions alone that he appeals ;

his daring knows no bounds. Even in the holy nature of the man Christ Jesus, as untainted by original or by actual sin, he could seek for somewhat whereon to build a powerful temptation. He had been incessantly assailing the patient Saviour in the wilderness, during forty days ; at the end of which he saw him tortured by the cravings of a hunger, which the termination of his prescribed season of fasting left him at liberty to satisfy. Now it would have been every whit as easy for our Lord, by the putting forth of his infinite power, to transform a stone into bread, as to multiply five loaves to the satisfying of five thousand people ; or out of the stones of the temple to raise up children unto Abraham. The desire for food was natural, lawful ; yea, it was a duty to satisfy it, since prolonged abstinence must end in self-murder. We may indulge in guesses and suppositions as to the precise grounds on which the suggestion stood as a temptation of the Devil, but all that we can certainly know is, the fact, that so it was, and that as such it was rejected. Coming as it did in the shape of a proposal merely to satisfy a human want by means of his divine power, we see the deep craftiness of this insidious and perfidious tempter, and learn a solemn lesson of perpetual watchfulness, and careful sifting of whatever is suggested to our minds, whether by outward circumstances, the counsel of friends, or the seemingly intuitive suggestions of our own minds : for he who assailed the Master will not spare the servant. ✕

Again, the object of our Lord's incarnation was to wrest from Satan the kingship of the world ; to cast

him out of his possessions, to take the prey from the mighty, and deliver the lawful captive. This was to be accomplished by exceeding bitter sufferings, of which a foretaste was then present, in the pangs of extreme hunger. Humanity shrank from what Deity foreknew ; and we have very touching statements from the evangelists, of the anguish that overwhelmed the blessed Jesus on the near approach of the climax of his woes. He was even brought to pray, " O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me ! " Matt. xxvi. 39. Yet in all this not a taint of evil existed ; it was the innocent shrinking of innocent, holy flesh, from intense tortures. Of this Satan seems to have taken his next advantage ; for he exhibited to the divine object of his infernal artifices all the kingdoms of the world, with a reference to his own acknowledged sovereignty over them, and proposed terms on which he would consent to abdicate in favour of his dreaded opponent, so rendering needless the terrific conflict in which the Lord must engage to effect his expulsion by force. This was a most refined temptation : it proposed a single momentary act of homage, in acknowledgment of the existing supremacy of that enthroned rebel and traitor, to be followed by the instantaneous resignation of his usurped dominion into the hands of the rightful King. He saw the mortal frame drooping under prolonged inanition ; he knew how closely the human mind naturally sympathized with the body's feebleness : he calculated on the effect of forty days' endurance of hunger, thirst, weariness, solitude, and unsheltered exposure ; and he, the Devil, the liar and

the murderer, boldly ventured on a proposition, the nature of which sends a shudder through the heart of the Christian, for whose sake the Lord of Glory was exposed to such an indignity as this! But it gives a very terrible view of the self-confident greatness of the adversary. May it sink deep into our minds, and fill us with that salutary fear which shall keep us ever mindful of the foe's devices.

The Lord's reply was strongly indignant; "Get thee hence, Satan!" But now this holy indignation, this desire to be freed from the presence of the arch-fiend, who had been harassing him for forty days and nights, this detestation of his odious suggestions, was next laid hold of as the ground-work of a third temptation. By the exercise of that mysterious power, of the nature of which we must remain ignorant, but ought never to be forgetful, the devil placed his destined conqueror on a pinnacle of the temple in Jerusalem, and calling to his aid the Scriptures, which had been successfully opposed to his preceding attempts, he invited the Saviour to cast himself down; "*for it is written*, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." Luke iv. 10, 11. To be at once delivered from the immediate presence of Satan, and received into the arms of the holy angels; while to decline it was apparently to shrink not only from the proof of his divinity, but also from a test of individual faith in the promise of God: this was a snare, the craft and subtlety of which are not always sufficiently considered;

nor the practical use of the lesson regarded. For, be it remembered, it was no necessary part of our redemption to make us acquainted with such a passage in our Lord's experience: the Holy Ghost has very sparingly revealed to us the particulars of what was by far the most grievous portion of his sufferings: we are not told what took place during the forty days, throughout the whole period of which St. Luke tells us, he was tempted of the devil. The thorny crown, the scourge, the nails, the spear, were the lot of many others, whose physical frames suffered, perhaps, no less exquisitely the pangs of a torturing death; but here we have a glimpse of mental and spiritual endurances, such as would crush the whole mass of guilty men—"the travail of his *soul*"—the "sorrows" and the "grief;" the heavy pressure wherewith "it pleased the Lord to bruise him." Isaiah liii. 10. We know not what ensued, when, just previous to this fearful agony in the garden, the Lord said, "The Prince of this world cometh." John xiv. 30. Neither can we penetrate what was implied in the expression used to the wretched men who seized on him—"This is your hour, *and the power of darkness*." Luke xxii. 53. Hereafter we shall doubtless know what in their present burdened state our spirits could not support: we shall better comprehend the nature and intensity of sufferings undergone by Him who poured out his soul unto death for us: but since what is given by inspiration is written for our learning, we may be assured that the scene so distinctly sketched of the mysterious encounter between the Son of righteousness and the

prince of darkness, is intended to fill us with godly fear ; to keep us watchful against the tremendous foe, and to endear to us the written word of the Old Testament, which some Christians are apt to slight ; but which furnished the Captain of our salvation with weapons wherewith to repel the bold assailant. The deity of Jesus is the sword, from which Satan shrinks ; and even in the brief, but inexpressibly momentous narrative referred to, there is observable a constant reference, on our Lord's part, to the eternal God, which appears calculated to remind the rebel that He, with whom he was presumptuously dealing, was yet the Lord his God. Some have represented this assault as planned by the evil one, to satisfy himself as to the fact of Jesus being the Christ : we cannot subscribe to this view : surely the prince of the devils was not worse informed than his subordinates, who, on the approach of our Lord, evermore yelled forth their confessions of his deity, and deprecating the visitation of his wrath. Satan knew full well, that the elect angels were no liars, like himself : and when in songs of joy and praise they announced to the shepherds the birth of " a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," he could not disbelieve their testimony. The particulars of that miraculous birth were not concealed from him ; neither was the promise which God gave to Eve, or the prediction declared to Ahaz, unknown. Still less can we for a moment suppose that the testimony given just before, at the Lord's baptism, had escaped him. No ; Satan knew with whom he had to do ; and well may *we* tremble, when we find him taking advantage

of the purest concomitants of undefiled humanity, and with them tempting the Lord his God.

Scripture likewise unfolds to us many instances in which God's servants have been assailed by the enemy, under the feigned character of a divine influence, to confirm which he has put forth all his powers, and wrought wonders. A very remarkable instance of this is found in the story of Israel's deliverance : and though it is a part of his craft to lead men so to explain away the passages touching himself, as to neutralize in a great degree God's gracious purpose in dictating them, we are not bound to follow their glosses,—we may venture to take Scripture as we find it, and to believe that when the Holy Ghost says a thing, he means what he says, and not something else. The marvels that Satan wrought by means of Pharaoh's magicians were calculated not only to harden the heart of the tyrant against the truly miraculous manifestations of God's power, but also to stagger the faith of Moses and Aaron in the divine origin of their mission. We are not at liberty to call them juggling deceptions, as some do ; mere sleight of hand tricks, performed by court conjurors : the word of God declares them to have been realities : and most instructive they are to us, who, looking for the national redemption and final restoration of Israel, according to the Lord's promise, now very near at hand, may expect to witness fearful things done in opposition to it by the power of Satan, who hates the Jew with an implacable hatred. We find the magicians of Egypt doing what man, without supernatural aid could never have accomplished.

“Now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments ; for they cast down every man his rod, and they became (not they seemed to become) serpents : but Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods.” Exod. vii. 11, 12. Here was a great wonder wrought by the power of Satan, but overruled to the fuller proof of the mighty work of God. When Moses turned the water into blood, the magicians did the same, but of course on a very small scale, since there could be but little left for them to practise upon. Again, they were able to imitate a miracle, by bringing up frogs upon the land ; but now the power of Satan ended ; the next wonder was one of creation, and life, even the lowest order of animal life is not his to bestow. He can kill, when permitted ; but to make alive was never given to him. His agents essayed to bring *up* frogs, from the recesses where they were hidden, and succeeded ; but when they attempted to bring *forth* lice from the dust of the earth, they utterly failed. It does not appear that after this they ventured on increasing the swarms of flies, as they had done that of frogs ; or to smite the cattle of the children of Israel, when the Lord had destroyed those of the Egyptians : and the next visitation drove them out of the royal presence, covered with loathsome sores which their infernal master had no power to heal.

How encouraging is this to us ! Satan may do much to terrify, to perplex, and to afflict us ; but as soon as he touches on a single attribute of the Most High, he fails, and is put to flight. Yet to make it appear that what he does is done immediately by the

Lord, is almost always his plan. Thus we find, when destroying the flocks of Job and their attendants, he so managed his elements of destruction, that the terrified messenger of evil tidings described it as a divine visitation : " The fire of God is fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep and the servants, and consumed them." Job. i. 16. It could not but dreadfully aggravate the affliction of the righteous man, to regard these sore trials as marks of the Lord's indignation, proceeding directly from Him : and no doubt it was so arranged to add power to the detestable suggestion conveyed through his wife. But though Job believed the lie, his faith in God's love failed not ; by faith he endured, and through faith he triumphed. If we do not distinctly see in what manner faith acts as a shield, or how effectually it quenches all the fiery darts of the wicked, it is because we do not sufficiently search the Scriptures. They abound with glorious illustrations : and the path of safety is so clearly laid down, that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein, if they simply attend to the indications given. To those who study it with prayer, as a book written not for the learned, but for " the poor of this world," the " fools," the " babes," to whom the Lord has declared that he will make his wonders of salvation known, the Bible is of all works the most intelligible ; only rendered otherwise by the foolish " wisdom of this world," holding up its moonlight to make the sun visible. Satan owes much even to the best of commentators ; for they have frequently assisted to veil both his person and his devices, by their ill-judged attempts at elucidation,

which, taken in their literal sense, God's words would have revealed important practical truths respecting him.

We are dwelling principally on the display of satanic presumption as the usurping god of this world: the means by which that usurpation was effected, present a fearful view of his daring self-reliance. In his very first approach to our unhappy race, then rejoicing in sinless felicity, he deliberately contradicted the express declaration of the Most High God; and appealing, as afterwards in the case of the second Adam, to a perfectly innocent, laudable desire, he stirred up Eve to seek higher attainments in knowledge, a clearer perception of good, as opposed to evil; then stimulating this thirst for information beyond due bounds—leading it to overpass the landmark of submission to the Divine will, he accomplished at once what must have appeared to himself a most hazardous undertaking. To represent God as a liar could not but be congenial to the diabolical nature of the accursed spirit of evil; but that a creature so formed to know, to love, and to serve the Lord, surrounded on all sides with the profusion of his bounty, and continually drinking from the fountain of all spiritual, all intellectual, all physical enjoyment, under His paternal hand,—that such a creature should at the first word be persuaded to credit the lie, and to rush into open transgression, must have been marvellous in the eyes of the tempter. How marvellous in ours must be the extreme daring that prompted him to the enterprise.

After such a proof of the weakness of human nature, while yet wholly untainted with sin, and the observa-

tion during many ages of the frightful depravity into which a being, originally created after the image of God, might easily be led, it becomes less inconceivable that Satan should have availed himself of the permission given to assault the man, Christ Jesus ; for be it always remembered, that only by permission could he approach the Saviour. We are distinctly told, that after the baptism and public recognition from heaven of our blessed Lord, preparatory to his ministerial, or prophetic work upon earth, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil." Matt. iv. 1. However high, however powerful, however privileged the great adversary may be, during the time of his yet remaining unbound, still, in the sight of God, he is equally helpless and contemptible, as he is hateful. He durst not even utter an extenuating word when his doom was pronounced, together with that of his wretched victims : he cannot hurt a hair on the head of one of Christ's meanest followers, without a special leave so to do ; and then he cannot overpass the precise boundary of his permitted machinations. "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried ; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." Rev. ii. 10. Some, not all, he should have leave to cast into prison, and they only that they might be tried, not destroyed ; and their trial should continue ten days, not a minute longer. His commission, no doubt, is much larger with respect to those who are still in "the snare of the devil ; who are taken captive by him at his will," (2 Tim. ii. 26,) and who will ultimately share his burning abode for

ever, if they turn not to Christ for deliverance ; but the blessed work of the Gospel preached unto man is “to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith which is in Christ ;” Acts xxvi. 18 ; and when this is once accomplished, the devil is compelled to recognise the indwelling power and presence of his conqueror in them ; and without a special leave, granted for some wise purpose, “That wicked one toucheth them not.”

IV.

SATANIC CUNNING.

BOLD as he is, and potent as he is, Satan rarely goes to work in a straightforward manner. He is still the old serpent, accomplishing by craft his insidious purposes, gliding stealthily on the path of his intended victim, and concealing himself beneath the innocent flowers with which the Creator has bountifully clad that path. In some parts of the world he does indeed enforce upon his bond-slaves the horrible service of worshipping him openly and by name, in order to deprecate the temporal mischief that they know he is able and willing to do them ; but, generally, he veils himself under fictitious names and forms, so obtaining to himself and his angels the honour and service that are due to God alone. St. Paul tells us this : “ What say I then ? that the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything ? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God ; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils ; ye cannot

be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." 1 Cor. x. 19, 20, 21. Satan persuades the poor heathen that some divine power resides in a beast, a reptile, a stone, or the stock of a tree; and having induced him to worship it, takes to himself and to his gang of devils the honours paid to the senseless idol. Well may he be termed the god of this world! To all its successive empires, crumbling into dust as they have done, he has been the object of supreme homage. The Babylonian might fall prostrate before his gigantic idol of gold; the Persian breathe his devout aspirations to the fiery orb of day; the Greek rejoice in his sculptured forms of exquisite beauty, and in the endless mysteries of an impure worship; the stern Roman might crowd his pantheon with the captured idols of every nation, and enlarge his unholy creed for the reception of each foreign fable; but in all, and over all, Satan ruled. Wherever idolatry is found, there is Satan the god of the worshippers. His voice was heard in the lowing of the Egyptian abomination, in the decree that prostrated the glory of the Chaldeans on the plain of Dura, and in every incentive to creature-worship under whatsoever form observed, and by whatsoever sanctions confirmed. The voice that from the Minaret proclaims the true prophetic character of Mahomet, is his; the bell that tinkles forth a signal for the adoration of a wafer-god, is sounded by him: yea, the secret whisper from within that withholds the hand about to extend the gift of charity, is the voice of his power too, for "covetousness is idolatry." Col. iii. 5. By fraudulent cunning, under a thousand manifestations,

he upholds his unseen, acknowledged dominion ; never to be overthrown till the Stone, cut out without hands, shall smite the huge image of universal idolatry, and gathering to itself the little, faithful band of protesters against this multifarious devil-worship, so fill the earth as to thrust out of it whatsoever resists the extension of that Stone's triumphant kingdom.

To adduce instances of all the devices of Satan's cunning recorded by or to be clearly inferred from the Holy Scriptures would be little less than to transcribe the Bible itself: we may however mention some few, where diabolical interference is expressly spoken of. The Scriptures do not often explain the part that the tempter and his hosts took in the toils, the struggles, the sins of the Old Testament church: but under the gospel dispensation, enough is revealed to enable us to trace his workings in former times, even where he was not specified by name. Who can fail to see this in the touching history of Joseph? When the youth declared his dream, the meaning was evident to his father, and his brothers were compelled to see it in the same light, galling as it was to their pride. Their envious, angry dispositions gave occasion for the tempter to assail them, and to suggest the cruel expedient by which, as they hoped, the "dreamer" was finally put out of their way; and in the varied persecutions that followed the blameless young believer, the malice of an adversary, potent and crafty, like Satan, may be plainly discerned. When the children of Israel corrupted themselves and made a golden calf, and worshipped it in the name of the Lord,

the artful adaptation to their circumstances of the idolatrous abominations that they had seen in Egypt no doubt originated in the same quarter: while the continual outbursts of discontent, disobedience, strife, and open rebellion against their leader, that marked the progress of the rescued tribes through the wilderness, all bear witness to his influence among them. Recollecting, as it has already been observed, that the Holy Ghost declares idol-worship to be devil-worship, we have positive proof that Satan and his legions presided over the heathen nations who surrounded the camp of Israel; and all the seductive arts practised by Balaam and others, to ensnare the Lord's people into forbidden paths, were certainly of his devising. Moses, when writing, as he is supposed to have done, the book of Job, must have received a very clear revelation concerning the power and activity of this fearful foe, although the record that he was commissioned to leave of his own people's history, makes precise mention of the evil one, as personally interfering with them: but he says, in the Lord's name, of the Israelites, "They shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring;" Lev. xvii. 7; and again, "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not." Deut. xxxii. 17. While against the sin of witchcraft, the acquirement of power or knowledge by means of Satanic communications, the law was very strict. "A man, also, or woman, that hath a familiar spirit, or

that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them." Lev. xx. 27. By this we see, that Satan had contrived to obtain a footing among God's peculiar people; that he had seduced them into holding intercourse with his subordinates for the purpose of sharing such supernatural gifts as he could impart; and secretly, by fraud and cunning, maintained this ground in the bosom of the visible Church. Most earnestly were they warned against this, the great condemning sin of the nations of Canaan: "There shall not be found among you any one...that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord; and because of these abominations, the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee." Deut. xviii. 10—12. That this peculiar mode of destroying God's people was persisted in by the crafty enemy to the very time of our Lord's appearance in the flesh, we have constant proof. When Abimelech, the son of Gideon, by a cruel conspiracy with the men of Shechem, slew his brethren, and obtained the chief power, the Lord defeated and punished both the guilty parties by sending an evil spirit to embroil them to their mutual destruction—a business well suited to the malignant subtlety of a devil; to whose suggestions, no doubt, or to those of one like him, the young man owed his successful progress in treachery so far. When Saul greatly offended the Lord, his chastisement was heavy: "The

Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” 1 Sam. xvi. 14. Thus commissioned, the evil spirit gave that unhappy king no rest, during the period of his visitations; but alternately depressed with melancholy, cankered with envy, and inflamed with murderous rage the mind of his victim; impelling him even to hurl a javelin at the loving, dutiful son, whose generosity interposed between him and the ill-requited minstrel, from whose holy strains of music the tormenting devil had so often fled. When the same monarch, in the near prospect of his last fatal battle, consummated his offences by seeking one who had a familiar spirit, and requiring of her the exercise of what he, as the Lord’s vicegerent, was solemnly bound to suppress, and if detected, to punish with death, we find him answered according to his folly, and driven to utter despair by the seeming success of an accursed spell. 1 Sam. xxviii.

Much has been written to elucidate, and not a little to explain away that extraordinary scene at En-dor; but when all has been said that man can say, there the brief, plain record stands, exactly as they found it, and all the wisdom of the wise fails to throw light on what God has left obscure. The word of God expressly declares that it was Samuel. “And Samuel said to Saul”—verse 15. “Then said Samuel”—16. Saul “was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel”—20. The terror, too, of the woman, and her remarkable expression, “I saw gods ascending out of the earth,” v. 13, would plainly imply, that her

incantations had been followed by something wholly different from what she anticipated ; she had invoked devils, but “ gods,” probably bright angelic beings, made visible to her for some wise purpose, appeared, bearing with them the resuscitated body of the buried seer, commissioned to assure the king that he and his sons should, on the morrow, be numbered with Samuel and the rest of the dead. We have no reason to suppose that the inspired narrative is otherwise than simply true : indeed, there is a daring presumption in questioning it : “ Let God be true, and every man a liar.” Rom. iii. 4. Least of all may we listen to those who would, in this case, as in that of Pharaoh’s enchanters, represent witchcraft as a mere juggling imposition on the senses of the credulous ; and ascribe the woman’s astonishment, not to the angelic character of those who came at the call, but to the appearance of any spiritual being whatever when she had only meant to play off a deception on the king. We ought rather to hail it as a glorious proof of the Lord’s watchful care over the dust, yea, over the names of his own people, which he will not suffer devils to tamper with ; and whatever difficulties remain to baffle our inquisitiveness, let them teach us humility, and remind us that “ secret things belong unto the Lord our God ;” Deut. xxix. 29 ; and that it is not to believers the description ought to apply, “ intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshy mind.” Col. ii. 18.

That devils continued to pollute the land of Canaan, and to exercise their wicked ingenuity in leading the

Lord's people to transgress, we have sufficient testimony. Ezekiel sets before us an awful picture of the abominations committed in Jerusalem by those practices which the Lord had denounced as sacrificing unto devils. In the eighth chapter of his prophecy, he relates what he saw in the "chambers of imagery:" followed by a description of the vengeance to be taken: and Zechariah, prophesying of mercy to be shown when the Lord shall heal the breach of his people, has this promise: "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will cut off the names of idols out of the land, and they shall be no more remembered: and also, I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirits to pass out of the land." Zech. xiii. 2. By what artifices these evil creatures opposed the work of God, we are, however, far more distinctly shown in the New Testament, where we find their nature, operations, and objects laid open in a wonderful manner by Him who came upon the strong man, took away his armour wherein he trusted, and divided his spoils.

One specimen of deep cunning is given in the very first instance, particularly related of a case of possession: it occurs in the eighth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel. "And when he was come to the other side of the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass that way. And behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was

a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding ; so the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out they went into the herd of swine : and behold the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.” Here we see, first, the deprecatory cry of the fiends ; acknowledging the omnipotence of the Lord, but pleading that the set time for tormenting them in the fiery pit was not yet come. They are good calculators of prophetic periods, and perfectly knew that their time on earth had not expired. Next, they made a request, the drift of which we could not have seen but for the effects that followed its success. They asked leave to enter the swine ; blessed be God ! Satan has no power even over unclean beasts, unless it be especially given of the Lord. Having permission, they instantly availed themselves of it by drowning every one of the herd in the sea ; and by this manœuvre they so alarmed the neighbouring inhabitants, who could expect no less from such a beginning than that the unknown visiter would destroy all their property, as to prompt a general request that he would depart out of their coasts. Thus for the time, was the dreaded gospel averted from a whole city, by the exceeding craft of these devils ; and in permitting their vile contrivance to succeed, the Lord mercifully provided a rich warning lesson for his church, to the end of time. May we all have grace to use it effectually in our wrestling contest with the principalities and powers of darkness !

Another mode of undermining where they durst not openly attack, was practised against the teaching of the Apostles. In Acts xvi. 16, we have the account. "And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying; the same followed Paul and us, saying, These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation. And this she did many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour." In this, as in the preceding case, the devil's device is shown by its fruits. His object in thus following and publicly testifying to the divine origin of the Apostle's teaching was probably two-fold. While allowed to continue it, he might expect to cast a slur on the doctrine in which a devil could thus approvingly seem to acquiesce, while a professed witch appeared as a daily follower of those who taught it; and if he provoked them to expel him, he might justly calculate on the vengeance of her masters, which overtook them immediately, and before night they were scourged, imprisoned, and made fast in the stocks. Seeing that all this was through the cunning of a devil, it is peculiarly delightful to proceed in the story, and find the whole overruled of God to the conversion of the keeper of the prison, and all his household, the shame of the unjust magistrates who had beaten them, and the honourable acquittal and dismissal of the Apostles from the place; where, no doubt, events so extraordinary

were blessed to the conviction of many ; the church at Philippi being, as we find by his epistle to it, an especial cause of thankfulness and joy to Paul.

Another instance had previously occurred, where a sorcerer, one who avowedly held communion with evil spirits, and through their workings in him merited the severe rebuke, “ O full of all subtlety and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness,” had endeavoured to turn away a Roman deputy from the faith ; and here the Lord manifested himself by showing that all the sorceries of Elymas, and his pretended sanctity, could not avert from him the stroke of instant blindness, which, to mark it as a direct visitation from on high, was announced by Paul the moment before he overtook him ; and this wonder confirmed the deputy in the faith. Acts xiii. 6—12. One more instance we have in Simon Magus, who was also a sorcerer, and who seemed to have been delivered from the dominion of evil spirits, by the preaching of the gospel, being able to make such a confession of faith as entitled him to baptism. In him the devil sought to bring a deadly disgrace on the Church of Christ, by obtaining the power of conferring the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost on whomsoever he would ; or if the idea of being able to buy the gift of God with money appear too foolish to have been really entertained by a spiritual being, we may suppose that he calculated on making the very proposal, from a professed worshipper, redound to the disadvantage of that church. In either case he was baffled. Peter was enabled to “ perceive ” that this seeming convert

was still in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, and rebuked him openly ; while the record of the attempt serves to this day as an invaluable preservative against certain unscriptural views of baptism that have crept into the church.

By considering in how many instances under the Old Testament dispensation, characters appeared, and events occurred parallel to these which meet us under the clearer light of the New, we may trace such hindrances and stumblings among the saints of old to the deep-laid plots of the rulers of the darkness of this world ; and by such an enlarged view of the enemy's sphere of action, we may learn to be more earnest in praying that "all those evils which the craft and subtlety of the devil or man worketh against us may be brought to naught;" and may also become more watchfully alert in seeking to baffle his devices.

V.

SATANIC CRUELTY.

It seems almost superfluous to devote a section to this subject, seeing that everything we can name respecting Satan and his angels, comes under the head of cruelty. From the first attempt of the devil to seduce Eve from her allegiance, his object has always been to plunge the whole human race into the bottomless pit, which he knows to be his own portion, "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." Rev. xxi. 8. But though he generally tempts men with the promise, or possession of present enjoyment, alluring them to sell their souls for worldly profit, still, whenever he can have his own way, he produces present calamities, and heaps upon his wretched victims tribulation and anguish as well in possession as in prospect.

On many occasions noted in the scripture, God, by his own arm, or by his holy angels, has punished the transgressor; but we find him in the majority of instances, giving offenders into the hand of Satan, or of wicked men who act under his influence, for punishment. It is mentioned by the Psalmist, though not by

Moses, that among the inflictions dealt forth to the tyrannic Egyptians, this was the greatest ; and the force of the expression is very remarkable : after detailing the plagues of blood, of flies, of frogs, of caterpillars, of locusts, of hail, frost, and thunderbolts, the inspired writer goes on :—" He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them." Psalm lxxviii. 49. When Satan sends an evil angel, he will sorely afflict the object of his mission ; but when God looses the restraints of these malignant creatures, and bids them smite, it is terrible indeed !

We must again recall that most important truth, that whatsoever worship is rendered to any but God, is rendered to devils ; and we shall be appalled at the scene of present, temporal cruelty and suffering laid open as the direct work of evil spirits. Moloch, the great idol of the heathen among whom Israel sojourned, was worshipped by the immolation of children, butchered by the knife and by fire ; and it is awful to think that the Lord's own people were ensnared to join in this frightful abomination. " They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan ; and the land was polluted with blood." Psalm cvi. 37, 38. If the Holy Ghost had not caused this to be written by inspiration for our warning, we could not imagine the possibility of Satanic power, cunning, and cruelty, reaching to this point : that parents should be willing to take their tender, helpless babes, and de-

liver them over to a most agonizing form of assassination, as an act of homage to the powers of hell, while they themselves were actually fed, day by day, with manna from heaven sent down by the merciful God, who quenched their hourly thirst with water flowing from a stony rock, and miraculously following them through the wilderness ; where every step of their way was marked by some wonder of supernatural care, and all endearing love. Here, indeed, must vile human nature lay its unclean lip in the dust ; and here may proud man learn to tremble at the dreadful sovereignty exercised by Satan over all who are not translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God, by living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Although every form of idolatry, or devil-worship, was not so murderous as that of Moloch, cruelty was, and is, the distinguishing feature of all. In a passage already quoted, when the Lord tells his faithful Church of Smyrna that he will, for the trial of their faith, give Satan power over some of them, the consequences are, of course, to be imprisonment and tribulation. We may judge from the manner of his dealing with Job, what use Satan naturally makes of any such indulgence. Calamities were heaped on the patient man faster than the tongues of his messengers could utter them. Blood and slaughter, burning and crushing, were the immediate indications of the devil's temporary authority over his possessions and his family ; and when he was permitted to touch the body of his victim, he left him no sound part, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, but transformed every particle

of healthful flesh into a loathsome and agonized sore. Not satisfied with this, he stirred up the very person who should have been the soother of his sorrows and the strengthener of his faith, to prompt the self commission of what Satan himself was withheld from doing; for there can be little doubt that her wicked suggestion to "curse God, and die," implied the act of self-murder, to be committed in blasphemous defiance of the Lord. But here the adversary prevailed not; God had permitted him to break the hedge set about Job's temporal possessions and comforts, but his life and his soul were still secured. Failing in this, with what refinement of prolonged cruelty did the arch fiend instigate his professed comforters to help forward Job's affliction.

Man's destruction is indeed the regular employment of atan. The Apostle Peter tells us, "Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." 1 Pet. v. 8. Like "the young lions roaring after their food," he prowls about, hoping to find some one forsaken of God, and left as a prey to his teeth. That this does sometimes happen, even with reference to the Lord's people, we are clearly told. Paul expresses it, when directing the Corinthian Church how to act towards a heinous offender, who having given place to the devil, was now doomed to experience the nature of that service for which he had cast away the easy yoke of Christ. "I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath done this deed. In the name of our Lord

Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." 1 Cor. v. 3—5. It appears, however, that on giving proof of very deep sorrow, and unfeigned repentance, the transgressor was received again, after experiencing, no doubt, for a time, what it was to be under the temporal power of the evil one. Another case of this sort is also mentioned by the same apostle. "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck; of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. It would appear from this, that a temporary endurance of the devil's power is sometimes seen needful for the perverse children of God, in order to terrify them by the foretaste of what an eternal subjection to so cruel a master must be: and Satan knows the length of his chain, he is probably quite aware when correction, not destruction, is all that he is licensed to inflict. Accordingly he makes the most of his time, not lulling and soothing them in their guilt, as with those who are wholly his own, but striving, as he did with Job, to render them desperate under the rod, that they may either run into despairing sin, "curse God, and die," or else, as was near being the case with the Corinthian offender, may utterly faint and perish, being "swallowed up of overmuch sorrow."

The Bible does not specify the particular cruelties

practised under various forms of idolatry ; but from what is perpetrated in the dark places of the earth at this day, we may judge of Satan's habitual proceedings among his worshipers. Human sacrifices, accompanied with circumstances of most horrible barbarity, are common in many parts of the world : mothers are required to butcher their tender infants, children their aged parents, and vast numbers of all ages are frequently put to death, as an offering to the spirit of a deceased ruler, or to be attendants on his soul in another world. Self-immolation is enforced as a sacred duty ; and if not willingly performed, the reluctant victim is murdered. On harmless animals most cruel tortures are inflicted, as an acceptable service to the devils whom the heathen seek to propitiate ; and in that nominally Christian system, of which the " coming is after the working of Satan," (2 Thess. ii. 9,) whose teachers are " seducing spirits," and its distinguishing requirements " doctrines of devils," (1 Tim. iv. 1,) we find the Satanic feature of wanton cruelty developed in full deformity. The rack is its main instrument of conversion to an idolatrous faith ; and the flames its award to such as will not venture to encounter everlasting burnings. Massacre on a scale only bounded by the number of its defenceless victims, and the limits of its physical power, persecution, to the utmost stretch of human endurance, these are the lot of its opponents ; while for the members of its own system it has the discipline of the scourge, of famishing hunger, of bodily austerity in every imaginable shape ; and a merciless rending apart of every tie that God

has formed to sweeten the cup of human life. In all this we should recognise the cruel hand of him who was a murderer from the beginning, even had not the word of God so distinctly set him forth as the framer and upholder of Popery, as to warrant our numbering among Scripture evidences, what the prophetic page describes in the passages already quoted from St. Paul; and in those of John, when describing the Beast which he saw rising out of the sea. He says, "The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority." Rev. xiii. 2. In the preceding chapter we are told (ver. 9) that the dragon is "that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world:" and again, of the Beast to whom he gave his power, it is written, "It was given unto him to make war with the saints and to overcome them," xiii. 7. The predictions of the Bible are no less certain than its historical relations; and if we desire an instance of the sustained cruelty of Satan, manifested through a space of twelve hundred years and upwards, not among barbarous people who never heard of the true God, but in the heart, and throughout the extent of Christendom, we must look at Popery—the Babylon of prophecy, concerning whom it is said, "Babylon the great . . . is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Rev. xviii. 2.

The cases of those possessed with devils is represented as being nearly always one of great suffering. The exceptions seem to be those instances where the infernal inmate was a welcome confederate, for the

sake of such supernatural powers as he could confer. Such was the "spirit of divination" possessed by the damsel who followed Paul and Silas; the "familiar spirits" that enabled Simon Magus, Elymas, and others, to practise sorcery; and the awful entering in of Satan himself into Judas Iscariot, who went and completed his tremendous bargain under that devilish influence. Among the many descriptions of demoniacal cruelty inflicted on the poor creatures who were brought to our Lord or to his apostles, we may notice the daughter of the Syro-Phenician woman, who was "grievously vexed with a devil." Matt. xv. 22. The poor boy whose father gave so piteous a description of his sufferings, afterwards confirmed it in the presence of our Lord. "Master, I have brought unto thee my son which hath a dumb spirit; and whensoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away." Mark ix. 17, 18. "And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him," v. 22. "And the spirit cried, and rent him sore, and came out of him, and he was as one dead; insomuch that many said, he is dead;" v. 26. The description also, as given by the same evangelist, of the demoniac from whom the devils passed into the swine, is very awful. "A man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he

was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." Mark v. 2—5. Again, we read, "There was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." Luke xiii. 11 : and that this was a visitation of Satanic cruelty, our Lord in express terms reveals. "Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" v. 16. We read, too, of "one possessed with a devil, blind and dumb." Matt. xii. 22. The last act of these fiends was always, when permitted, a cruel one : they "rent" or "threw down" their victims, when departing, though restrained from fatally injuring them. Thus it was with the man in the synagogue, who had a spirit of an unclean devil, which testified, in evident terror, to our Lord's divinity ; for he "cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone ; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? Art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art ; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him down in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not." Luke iv. 33, 34, 35. When Paul, through the abundance of revelations vouchsafed to him, was in danger of becoming puffed up, a chastening hand was laid on him, by giving Satan power to afflict his body, in some way not particularized. He calls it "a thorn in the flesh ; the messenger of Satan sent to buffet me." 2 Cor. xii. 7. It was grievous, for he thrice besought the Lord,

that it might depart from him : it was visible, and humbling to human pride, for he gratefully mentions it to the praise of the Galatians, that it did not lessen their regard for him, or their reverence for his mission. "Ye know how, through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the gospel to you at first : and my temptation, which was in my flesh, ye despised not, nor rejected ; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus." Gal. iv. 13, 14.

In all these, and many other instances, we find, that the power of Satan, to whatever extent it is carried, is always cruelly oppressive : Peter testifies of our Lord Jesus, that he "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil." Acts x. 38. But grievous as were the sufferings that Satan inflicted on the bodies of those over whom he had liberty to tyrannize, they were as nothing compared with what he can do when assaulting the mind. We do not here speak of such as knowingly act upon his vile suggestions, but of those who are the unconscious, or defenceless objects of his covert attacks. On this subject the book of God does not furnish us with descriptions of many individual cases ; it rather shows us the machinery at work, and enables us, each from his own experience, to judge of the universal results. There is not an impulse of our nature, nor a faculty of our minds, nor an inclination of our hearts—there is not a duty, there is not an enjoyment, there is not a trouble, but Satan both can and will lay hold of it to tempt, to harass, to oppress our souls. Hence, from age to age, every believer, how great soever his privileges, and

how happy soever his experience, must often take up the apostle's language, and secretly confess, that "we that are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened."

2 Cor. v. 4. And the nearer a Christian endeavours to follow the steps of Paul, in active employment for the Lord's cause among men, the more surely will he have to join in his testimony, who spoke so touchingly of his inward trials, "serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations." Acts xx. 19.

In what manner Satan afflicted the affectionate Peter is fully detailed ; and no one who loves the Lord Jesus can for a moment doubt, that the agonies of his mind were far greater and more intolerable than any bodily suffering whatever could possibly have been. He was grieved to hear his adored Master predict the desertion of his disciples, and said, "Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended." Matt. xxvi. 33. Our Lord, in reply, assured him, that before the cock next crew he should thrice have denied him ; and Peter, as yet little aware of the power of his invisible adversary, and his own miserable weakness, reiterated the confident declaration, "Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee;" v. 35. St. Luke records that the Lord also addressed him, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat;" Luke xxii. 31 ; thus plainly declaring whose was the cruel work ; and when, after forsaking that gentle, loving Master, leaving him in the hands of his foes, and cautiously, at a safe distance, stealing after,

to watch what should become of him whom he had just declared he would follow to prison and to death, the too confident servant was led by the devil to deny that he even knew his Lord, and to confirm the lie with oaths and curses : how dreadful must have been his feelings at the moment—how agonizing the tortures of his conscience, when the look of his compassionate Lord, suddenly turned upon him at the crowing of the cock, brought his sin home to his bosom with all its aggravations ! He could not fall at the feet of the captive—he could by no possibility approach him through the phalanx of weapons that hemmed him in. He could not cause the voice of his passionate supplication to reach that patient ear ; nor could he hear from the beloved lip the word of pardon. Probably the countenance turned upon him with that heart-breaking look, was already bruised by the ruffian stroke of his persecutors ; and, though we may fairly believe that the power of God, acting without a word spoken, at that moment drove Satan from his diabolical work in the mind of Peter, with what unmingled anguish of soul must the apostle have recalled his cruel desertion, and insulting denial of his blessed Master : while John, who had professed nothing more than others, was boldly exposing himself to the peril of a recognition in the midst of the judgment hall. All had forsaken Jesus and fled, “ that the Scriptures might be fulfilled ; ” and for this no Satanic influence was necessary. The weakness of human nature, wholly unassisted by divine strength, would suffice to hurry a handful of unarmed men from the presence of a hostile band, with

weapons and torches, who had taken captive their leader, the root of all their confidence. This panic over, John was enabled instantly to return and to tread, as near as he could approach him, the steps of his Lord: so presenting a contrast to Peter's treachery, which made the latter at once inexcusable and doubly odious in the eyes of the unhappy culprit himself. To us the story is most important: it was Satan's hour, as the Lord had declared. The prince of this world came, and had nothing in Him; but in every one of us, he has enough to furnish a broad ground for any temptation that he may choose to bring; and the ferocious cruelty of his dealing against the heart and conscience of the poor, weak fisherman, at that season of bitter sorrow and irreparable bereavement, may teach us a lesson of continual watchfulness and prayer, that *we* may be able to resist the wiles of the devil.

Cruelty is altogether a Satanic quality; it could not exist but for him. God is love, and all that God made was innocent, lovely, loving, till sin entered in, to defile, and Satan got power to destroy. In testimony to this, we have the predictions that point to the period when Satan shall be bound, and earth be wholly free from his influence. Thus cruelty in all its forms shall disappear. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah ii. 4. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the fatling, and the young lion together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed—their young ones

shall lie down together ; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain." Isaiah xi. 6—9. Such will be the consequence of removing the originator of all wickedness, the instigator of all cruelty from the earth, and re-establishing the reign of love.

VI.

SATANIC ACTIVITY.

“THE angel of the bottomless pit ” is called Abaddon, or Apollyon, a destroyer, (Rev. ix. 11,) and in the work of destruction his activity is indeed great. When we reflect on the extent of our globe, on the number of its inhabitants—an ever-changing, ever-increasing population—during almost sixty centuries, and the vast varieties of mind, temper, disposition, and circumstances that prevent the history of any one among them from being the history of any other ; when, too, we remember that of all these multitudes not one has escaped the temptation of the devil, and that the main bulk of the whole have been doing his will, promoting his interests, and acting in harmony with his general design, in the face of all the evidences that crowd around them to the being and power of a holy, just, and beneficent God—we surely must discern the characteristic of amazing activity, in him who keeps so mighty a host true to his interests, and blind to their own.

When Noah preached righteousness to the men of

his generation, and verified his warnings by preparing before their eyes the ark which was to preserve all flesh that did not perish in the coming deluge, he made not a single convert to his doctrine ; and the angel of the bottomless pit swept off the whole generation of men into his own abode, one family only being reserved. Scarcely was that reserved family re-established on earth's surface, when he beguiled the godly patriarch into an act of intemperance ; and this transgression the enemy also turned to such advantage, that it laid a third part of his progeny under a malediction, of which Satan well knew how to avail himself for further mischief. He fastened on the posterity of Canaan with peculiar tenacity ; and plunged them into every abomination. So far as the Bible traces their history, we find it one of perpetual crime and suffering ; and at this day, their condition, physical, moral, and spiritual, is a blot on the name and nature of man. What prodigious activity has he shown, and how extensively, how unremittingly have the rulers of the darkness of this world debased and afflicted the children of Canaan !

Shem had a blessing, and Japheth also, which Satan could not hope to reverse ; but against each of their races he has prevailed in a signal manner, and to this day he glories in the triumph achieved. From Shem, a single family was chosen, to be blessed above all the nations of the earth, and to be a universal blessing. To them were committed the laws and the oracles of God ; through them alone was He revealed, and his will made known to the world ; and above all, of them

was to come that seed of the woman, promised even in the hour of man's transgression, who should bruise the serpent's head, and finally destroy him and his works. The history of Israel is a continued history of Satanic diligence : he led Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, into acts of most sinful dissimulation ; Sarah, into tyranny and injustice ; Rebecca and Leah into most gross deceit. In them he indeed exhibited himself as the father of lies ; and in the sons of Jacob, proved himself the "murderer from the beginning." He stirred up the King of Egypt to destroy their progeny, by oppression, and by bloodshed ; and to resist the delivering hand of the Lord, until the waters of the Red Sea swept the whole mighty host of Egypt at once into hell. He then followed the rescued people through the wilderness, exciting them to every species of provocation that might compel the Lord to destroy them ; and succeeded even in drawing them to forsake the worship of their own God, the Lord of heaven and earth, for that of devils. While Moses was absent, receiving from Jehovah the law which had been promulgated with such fearful majesty but a few days before from Mount Sinai, and while the mountain yet smoked with fire from heaven, Satan drew them into idolatry the most gross ; even surpassing that of the Egyptians ; for what they worshiped was the mysterious, though irrational creation of God, while the Israelites paid divine homage to what, but the day before, had dangled from their own ears. The terrible example made did not reclaim them ; they went on to transgress, and were soon drawn into an active participation of the

idolatrous sin of the Canaanites, whom they had been commanded for that very sin to destroy. Balaam had no power to curse Israel, but he prevailed by Satan's subtlety, to make them curse themselves. After many generations had passed away, each exceeding the former in iniquity, the revolt became so grievous, that ten out of the twelve tribes were cast off; delivered up to themselves and to Satan, and whither he has conducted them, or where they now abide, no man knoweth.

The two that were left, instead of taking warning by their dreadful fate, went on to provoke the Lord to jealousy, until they too, in righteous though reluctant judgment, were delivered into the hands of their enemies for severe chastisement: and this had such an effect on them, that, as a body, all the wiles of the devil have not prevailed again to involve them in the guilt of idolatry. This, which had been the powerful engine of Satan for so many ages, now failed; and did he therefore abandon the hopeless task of inviting them to rebellion? No: his craft—which may the Lord speedily and for ever confound!—discovered another mode of rendering void the gracious purposes of God toward them: and he gradually substituted for the immutable, perfect law of Jehovah, the commandments of vain, foolish men: he first encumbered, then superseded the written word, by means of traditions, which, being reduced to writing, usurped the place of Holy Scripture; and by that means so completely blinded the eyes, and hardened the heart of the chosen people, that when, at the appointed time, the Deliverer, the Messiah, the Lord whom they looked for, suddenly

came, they despised, rejected, hated, and crucified him !

For this, destruction, terrible destruction, came upon them : and alas ! not to the pages of the Bible, but to the streets of our own cities, the hovels of our own villages must we turn, to know what, through the hateful devices of the devil, has befallen Israel—to see how the Lord hath dealt with the dearly-beloved of his soul. The contemplation is enough to weigh down the most rejoicing spirit, in bitter grief and despondency : but, blessed be the Lord ! this dispensation of wrath is well nigh passed away. “Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion ; for the time to favour her, yea the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.” Psalm cii. 13, 14.

When the Lord Jesus appeared among the people, who for many centuries had eagerly looked for his advent, he chose out twelve men to be the witnesses of his mighty works, the companions of his laborious path, the privileged intimates of his merciful bosom. Of these, Satan fixed on one, took up his abode in him, transformed him into his own image, and wrought in him to become the betrayer and murderer of his Master. The reading through any one of the four Gospels with a continual reference to the part that Satan was acting all along, will give an awful idea of his indefatigable diligence.

We now come to Japheth ; his posterity, reckoned among Gentiles, as having no part in the very peculiar advantages belonging to this branch of Shem, were

received into participation of their rich privileges, and indeed into their place altogether, until the indignation against them should be accomplished. Grafted nto the good olive, (Rom. xi. 17,) they became living branches: and though Satan might exult in the total ruin of Israel, the destruction of the holy city, and desolation of the goodly land, he had the mortification of seeing that Christ had yet a church, though Israel was not gathered; (Isaiah xlix. ;) and that his word would run and be glorified throughout the world; to the ends of the earth, and in the isles of the sea. He therefore set himself to defile and destroy the Gentile, even as he had done the Jewish Church: and two of his stale devices were found effectual here. By means of oral traditions, abundantly falsified, he set aside the Scriptures: and so having made the commandments of men more valid than the commands of God, he contrived by their means to bring in idolatry; not under its real title of idol-worship, or devil-worship, but on the principle of the golden calf, proclaiming a feast to Jehovah, while eating and drinking, dancing and rejoicing, in honour of the manufactured abomination of their own device. To such an extent did he succeed, that out of the whole mass of the Gentile Church, occupying the place of the Jew, and with pious horror trampling him under foot, only a very small, unknown, or where known, persecuted and butchered remnant, could be found, who did not far outdo the Jew in the worst of his iniquities.

But the Bible remained; and some were found to read it: and through the obstinate fidelity of the scorn-

ed, detested Jew, this new counterfeit of Christianity, with all hell at his heels, could not falsify the blessed text. By its means, the faith of God, never extinguished, fully revived and spread abroad, and occasioned a great falling off from Popery to Christ. Here was a fresh call on the indefatigable diligence of Satan : he responded to it, by bringing in as many heresies, and by effecting as many divisions as he possibly could among those who held aloof from the idolatrous system ; in the hope that he should yet be able so to arm it again with temporal power, as to crush the little flock of Christ within its gigantic jaws. In this position he now stands, working among the three branches of the human family, with the angry zeal of one, who knows that his time is very short. The descendants of Canaan he keeps in bondage of body and soul the most galling, the most degrading that man can submit to ; and until within a short period, he had power even over a truly enlightened Christian nation, to make them active agents in perpetuating, yea, in aggravating the horrors of his yoke, on the necks of their sable brethren. Shem's principal representatives, the chosen, highly-favoured children of Jacob, are yet wholly blinded to the great truth which they have conveyed to us ; and with the books of the Old Testament in their hands, and with the deepest reverence for all that Moses and the prophets have written concerning Christ, their eyes are withheld from recognising the substance of the shadow which they so cherish : and with the view of the water of life flowing across their path, they perish in unslaked thirst. The fiction with which Sa-

tan has long deceived so large a proportion of nominal Christendom, is still sustained ; and up to this time he keeps his ground, in defiance of increasing light on all sides ; so that we only now and then hear of an individual rescued from the dominion of that blasphemous cheat, and enabled to see the snare coiled around him ; while full as many, brought up in the doctrine and worship of the true God, turn aside unto fables, and believe the lie. When we consider that of all these multitudes, and the myriads beside who have not been specified, every single individual requires the vigilant superintendence of some subtle spirit to continue his delusion, to harden him against the truth, and even against the pleadings of his own natural reason, and the surrounding evidences of a power, goodness, holiness, that he refuses to acknowledge, we may partly conceive what active duty is required of each several angel among the fallen host : and how prodigious must be the diligence of their leader, ever seeing and directing such a complicated work.

In this instance alone, we have gone beyond the track of Scripture history ; but not that of prophecy. The Bible sets forth what should come to pass ; and we look at what has occurred, and what will yet occur, before our eyes. The prolonged bondage and wretchedness of Canaan's race, the unbelief, dispersion, and continued degradation of Israel, and the great apostasy from the Christian Church, with its duration and consequences, are all most exactly foretold. And Satan, as "the god of this world," "the prince of the power of the air," "the spirit that now worketh in the child-

ren of disobedience," is distinctly shown to be their governor, until, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, they are delivered out of his hand, and translated to the kingdom of God's dear Son.

VII.

SATANIC KNOWLEDGE.

THERE is a wisdom peculiar to the powers of evil whereof the apostle speaks: "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish;" James iii. 15; and there is a knowledge gained by close, continued observation, apart from any divine aid whatever, and which fits a man to deceive and defraud his neighbour. In this, we may believe Satan abounds; and we are quite sure that he has the power of communicating it, because the Scriptures distinctly say so. He can enable his servants to prophecy, but not true things: John saw an unclean spirit proceed out of the mouth of the false prophet. Rev. xvi. 13. He can endow them with miraculous powers; as witness Pharaoh's enchanter, and the predicted apostasy of him, "whose coming is after the workings of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders;" 2 Thess. ii. 9; and who, under another name, is described as he that "doth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men; and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by

the means of those wonders which he hath power to do in the sight of the beast." Rev. xiii. 13, 14. The heaven here spoken of, is, of course, the upper region of our atmosphere ; for to the heaven of God's presence Satan cannot extend his influences ; however, he may, by some mysterious mandate, be made to appear there, as we have already noticed. By devilish wisdom he may devise many crafty plans, and by devilish power carry them into most destructive operation ; and it is important to consider this point, lest we fall into the very common snare, of despising and neglecting what we are bound most vigilantly to watch and to guard against.

Men, by accurate observation of the phenomena of God's works, and tracing effects to their causes, sometimes make marvellous discoveries ; and by a judicious application of the knowledge acquired, by analogical reasonings, fit combinations, and often by apparent accidents, occurring in the course of the curious investigations, they produce results that bear the character of amazing inventions. Yet how limited, how clouded, how defective, how utterly insignificant is the widest sphere of man's laborious observation, compared with what Satan can take in at a glance. The painful calculations of the astronomer, arrived at after years of sleepless nights, and requiring probably as many more studious days to render them intelligibly credible to others, are simple matters of common observation to him. Those hidden laboratories, where the elements in mystery and darkness work, are so far open to him as created intelligence is permitted to ex-

plore them ; and he certainly knows our frame far better than we ourselves know it. We have the direct, explicit, reiterated testimony of God himself, that Satanic influence could quench the sight, close the hearing, fetter the tongue, paralyze the limbs, distort the body, madden the brain, and impart to man the force of a powerful, ferocious beast. Instances of all this have been adduced from Scripture, in the preceding sections ; as also the marvels wrought, as in the case of the Egyptian sorcerers, propably by the application of Satanic skill, in what we call chemistry, natural history, and other branches of science. We may doubt, or rather deny his ability to raise a tempest ; for the stormy winds fulfil God's word : (Psalm cxlviii. 8 ;) but he can at least do more than Columbus did, when by calculating and foretelling an eclipse of the moon, he terrified the poor ignorant natives into compliance with all his demands.

An instance of his subtlety occurring a few years since, and attested by unimpeachable evidence, may illustrate this. The writer had it from one who was on the spot ; and it has also been published. The late Lady Hester Stanhope, it is well known, fell into a snare of the devil, abjured her faith, and lived among the mountains of Djourni as an eastern princess, wholly divorced from all former ties, not only to her country, but to her God ; she affected a knowledge of futurity, peculiar to those who practise witchcraft. Her house was visited by many strangers, including Englishmen ; and they were hospitably entertained. At the time now alluded to, some zealous Christians oc-

casionally took up their temporary abode with her ; the Rev. Lewis Way, Joseph Wolff, and others, who earnestly longed to lead into the fold this wandering sheep and her infidel household. This, of course, would raise Satan's opposition in no common degree ; for the smallest portion of good leaven lodged in that lump might work the ruin of his kingdom in a place where every inch of territory is an important possession. Among the members of her establishment was a Dewish, a pretender to superior knowledge and sanctity, a teacher and worshiper of false gods, therefore of devils ; held in esteem by Lady Hester, and in great awe and admiration by her dependants. This man's influence could not co-exist with that of a Christian minister ; and though it does not appear that he took any part in resisting them, Satan contrived so to establish his character as to seal up his followers in deeper darkness than before. A tremendous earthquake buried Aleppo in ruins : the city was overthrown and the inhabitants perished. Situated many miles distant from the scene of devastation, without the possibility of any human communication, and indeed before it took place, this Dewish openly proclaimed that Aleppo was destroyed. In that advanced stage of the subterranean process, an observant being could doubtless tell that the crisis was at hand—could point the spot where, from circumstances ordered of God, it was evidently to burst : and thus by simply using the tongue of an ungodly man to convey the intimation, he established that man's claim to a prophetic spirit. It was much talked of at the time, and

questioned by some who would neither admit that a divine revelation was made to so evil a character, and for no good end, or that Satan has power to discover the yet unrevealed purposes of God. We admit both these objections, yet the tale is true ; and on this ground it is perfectly explicable.

And on this principle we may account for securing revelations of future, or very distant events, by dreams or otherwise, where they often tend to foster a dangerous superstition, or to strengthen belief in a false doctrine. Such things have come to pass within the knowledge of some who may read these pages. Intimations have been given of a death, or other occurrence, and mentioned also by the party receiving the impression, hours before it was possible for intelligence to arrive : sometimes at the very moment the circumstance took place ; and instances could be named where Popery has at once been embraced on the strength of such juggling devices of Satan. A person apparently in the soundest health may be told by another, seemingly inspired, that within such a period he should die ; and the prediction may be literally accomplished. In many cases, aneurism for instance, an organic disease works its way for a long time without producing any sensible external effect : but Satan marks, and calculates, and confidently pronounces what, when the event comes to pass, is regarded as an oracle of God. That He can and does graciously warn and instruct his servants, both "in dreams and visions of the night," and in various other ways, we cannot for a moment doubt ; neither would we approach by a single step the awful

crime of even ignorantly attributing to evil powers what may be the gracious intimations of the Holy One : we merely notice some illustrations of the Scripture assertion, that intercourse may be held with "familiar spirits," and witchcraft practised, and supernatural knowledge acquired by diabolical aid.

Three score years render a clever man shrewdly experienced and worldly wise, if he have passed them in carefully looking about him with a view to his own interests. What then must be the advantage to Satan of nearly six thousand years' observation of all that concerns our race ? The stupendous intellect of an angel, faculties of which we can form no conception except from their mighty effects ; enough of daring to brave, and enough of malignity to persecute "the Mighty Father, the Everlasting God, the Prince of Peace," and to aid all of these, an ally already engaged on his side within the bosom of every child of man. Such is our adversary the devil : such is that roaring lion who goeth about seeking whom he may devour ; and shall we be lulled into security, despite the awful admonitions which the Holy Ghost hath given, because it has become fashionable to despise his power, disbelieve his interference, and make light of his name ?

But, apart from supernatural knowledge, there is a wisdom which Satan imparts, by means of those suggestions that every one among us can testify he has power to insinuate into our minds. The apostle was speaking of that external worldly religion which is consistent with "bitter envying and strife" in the

heart. Where these are allowed, he bids us "glory not, and lie not against the truth," for the wisdom in which such persons boast themselves "descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish." Some have erringly compared the mind of an infant to a clean sheet of paper, on which good or bad may be written at will; this is wrong; for the paper is impure, and blotted from the very first, and scribbled over with all evil; but, so far as wisdom and knowledge are concerned, the sheet is certainly blank, until reason begins to unfold itself; and Satan is eagerly on the alert with his subordinate fiends, to impart that which cometh from beneath. It is a solemn consideration that every idea conveyed to a child's mind must be from one of these sources: man can originate nothing: he may imbibe the notions of others, but they too must be sought for under one of the heads named by the apostle: the wisdom that cometh from above, which is pure and peaceable, or the wisdom that cometh from beneath, which is Satanic. Of the latter class was Ahithophel's wisdom; in a good cause, his plan of carrying on the war would have been sound counsel; but being brought to aid the cause of treason, rebellion, parricide, it was devilish. Satan suggested it, and God turned it into foolishness. 2 Sam. xvii. 14.

The wisdom taught by our adversary is always opposed to the truth; it is a knowledge that puffeth up, and makes those who possess it fools — "For my people is foolish, they have not known me: they are sottish children, they have none understanding: they are

wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge." Jer. iv. 22. And this must be unlearned: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness;" and again, "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." 1 Cor. iii. 18, 19, 20. The Egyptians were fully replenished with this infernal wisdom, when planning to diminish the people of Israel by destroying the male children, they said, "Come on; let us deal wisely with them." Exod. i. 10. These, and similar passages, clearly showing that the wisdom of this world emanates from the god of this world, are calculated to prove to us the danger that besets the path of such as are bent on acquiring knowledge apart from godliness. They have a master at hand, ready and able to teach them as much as human understanding may grasp, and sure to clothe with every attraction the bait which he has found to be so efficacious in bringing souls into his net; but the price of his lessons is such, that the man who strikes that bargain is bankrupt forever.

SECTION I.—THEIR EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER.
OF EVIL SPIRITS.

VIII.

THE LIMIT OF SATANIC POWER.

WHENCE comes it that, in proportion as men are obviously under the influence of an unrenewed heart they seem disposed to make light of the solemn reality which we are considering ? Why do they most question or despise the enemy's power, when giving the plainest proofs of his unresisted dominion over themselves ? Our Lord has furnished us with a clue to unravel the mystery : he says, in direct reference to it, " When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace ; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils." Luke xi. 21, 22. Man is born in a state of rebellion against the supreme authority of his sovereign king ; and likewise in such a condition of mental and spiritual darkness, that he cannot be brought to see himself as he is, until divinely illuminated. He cannot comprehend the plain meaning of assertions repeated again and again in the volume to which, as a whole, he perhaps yields his assent, but which, in its details and its per-

sonal applications, is probably still a sealed book to him. St. Paul describes man as being "carnal, sold under sin;" Rom. vii. 14; and again he says, "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Rom. viii. 7. This characteristic of disobedience belongs to the whole human race, however reluctant they may be to acknowledge it. Indeed, the scheme of redemption necessarily hinges upon the fact, that man had offended God, and could not deliver himself. We also know in what way he was originally brought into this condemnation: "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners;" Rom. v. 19; and Satan is expressly set forth as the ruler of the *disobedient*, in that important passage which should never be out of our minds; "And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to *the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of DISOBEDIENCE*; among whom also we ALL had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; *and were by nature the children of wrath*, even as others." Eph. ii. 1-3. Here we have it laid down as an axiom that those who are in their natural state of disobedience, those who still walk according to the course of this world, are under the dominion of Satan, possessed by him, since he works in them until the finger of God casts him out. When, therefore, we find men of unrenewed spirits making light of the power, and even hinting doubts of the existence of

Satan, while they denounce as childish the declarations of others concerning him, who have felt within themselves that mighty conflict—the overcoming of the strong man, taking away the armour wherein he trusted and dividing the spoils, what does it prove but the necessity for increased earnestness on our part, in declaring the reality of what Satan, for his own sake, would represent as a fiction? So long as the natural man remains ignorant or incredulous of the fact that he is himself a palace of Satan, he will not throw open the door of his heart to the Deliverer who stands and knocks at it: so long as the believer can be induced to forget the strong testimony of God to the enemy's restless designs and efforts, he will leave the door so unguarded as to endanger the re-entrance of its former master, to the clean-swept and garnished habitation. Surely, then, it is a point of great moment with the enemy to lull our minds, and banish as far as he can our salutary dread of him; and hence what some, smarting from the bitter conflict, have recorded for the warning and encouragement of others, is stigmatized as weakness or insanity. Assuredly he who dared to face, to taunt, and to tempt the Lord Jehovah himself, deserves a higher rank than that assigned to him by such deceived commentators—the rank of a nursery hobgoblin!

Another very important fact bears upon the same point: Satan has no compulsory power over man. Let him do his utmost, he cannot compel any human being to transgress; he can only suggest, stimulate, provide occasion, and work in the children of disobedience to

accomplish their own ruin. If we were helpless machines it would be different; but an act of volition on our part is necessary to constitute actual sin against God. Eve thought to cast the whole burden of guilt from herself upon the serpent; and if he had forced the fruit down her throat, contrary to her will, no doubt she would have stood guiltless; but she was a consenting party, and so are we in every advantage that the devil obtains over us. Even the heathen Gentiles who never heard of a divine revelation, have a law written in their hearts; a conscience accusing or else excusing them; (Rom. ii. 15;) and among us who is there able to plead actual compulsion or anything beyond a temptation so strong perhaps as to appear irresistible, because he did not at the moment lay hold of the promise annexed to a precept that none ever followed in vain. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James iv. 7. It is our resistance that Satan dreads; he knows we can put him to flight if we detect and face him: therefore his step is noiseless, his movement stealthy, and his battery masked.

It is evident that our Lord's incarnation shook the kingdom of Satan upon earth in a peculiar manner; but without leaving the direct testimony of Scripture, and hazarding conjectures where the least error may lead to very dangerous results, we cannot say much on that subject. This we know, that the evil spirits expressed great terror at his approach, deprecating his interference, and crying out against the exercise of a power which they with one voice acknowledged. The seventy disciples, also, having been sent forth, returned

again with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." Luke x. 17—20. This certainly implies a great blow inflicted on the visible kingdom of Satan among men; but that its extent was limited by the area to which the Gospel spread, seems also clear, from the case of the seven sons of Sceva, (Acts xix. 13—16,) who took upon themselves like some others, to exercise in the name of the Lord in whom they did not themselves believe. "We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth." To which the unclean spirit replied, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are ye?" and instead of obeying the unauthorized command to come out of the man, he gave him strength to leap upon and overcome all the seven pretenders, so that they fled from the house, naked and wounded. But though we cannot define either the precise nature or extent of the curb laid down upon the enemy by the first advent of our Lord, it is certain that a great change took place shortly after in the manifestation of Satanic influences, which assumed more of a spiritual and less of a physical character, so that cases of obvious possession and witchcraft became less frequent, gradually disappearing before the advancing light of the Gospel. In our day they have apparently ceased,

and with them, in a great measure, the belief in their having ever existed, while doubts that give the direct lie to the inspired Scriptures are started, listened to and canvassed with a grievous insensibility of the gross insult thus put upon the divine Author of that Book. Satan knows better than we do the extent of our power over him: the weakest believer is more than a match for him and all his angels, and would be able to prove it if brought to the test in the sight of men: therefore Satan lurks in ambush, forbearing to show himself openly as of old, lest he should draw forth the dormant energy of the Christian, inducing him to unsheath the sword that has slumbered in the scabbard until its master forgets that he holds such a weapon. The enemy indeed seems to be preparing for his last campaign against the church, by inducing such an oblivion of his history and features, that when he advances again she will not recognise him as the old serpent; while among the ungodly he prevails to have his existence so utterly disbelieved, and his name converted into a jest, that he may work in them to any extent. They will obey his worst impulses as the dictates of their own wisdom, and exhibit as honourable trophies of liberty and independence, the heaviest fetters that he can rivet on their enslaved minds.

We may then safely assert that a limit exists, beyond which the power of Satan and his crew cannot pass; and that it is known to us where that limit lies. Our blessed Lord disclosed it, when he said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed

for thee, *that thy faith fail not.*" Luke xxii. 31, 32. It is our faith that effectually baffles his strongest efforts, as St. Paul declares, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Eph. vi. 16. And in a case of possession, where Jesus cast out a devil which his disciples had vainly tried to expel, when the latter asked the Lord, "Why could we not cast him out?" he answered, "Because of your unbelief." Matt. xvii. 19, 20. It is evident that man, being himself the lawful captive of Satan, and naturally inclined to follow his suggestions and to do his bidding, has nothing in himself calculated to oppose any effectual resistance to his power; and it is only as Christ, the conqueror of Satan dwells in him by faith, influencing his desires, and strengthening him with strength in his soul, that many may venture to face so terrible a foe. All other means of defence are utterly vain: Satan knows no fetter in his actings among men, but that which Christ has thrown upon him; and there is nothing so sure to drive the sinner to seek refuge in his Saviour, or to keep the believer close to him, as the clear comprehension of this momentous truth, that Satan, "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it," meets no restraint but where he meets Christ enthroned in the heart of a ransomed sinner.

These hinderers of Satan's work of destruction, which he, "a murderer from the beginning," (John viii. 44,) is ever seeking to carry on and extend, are the people of God: they occupy through the reconciled blood of the cross, that position in the divine favour

which man was originally created to enjoy, but which Satan persuaded him to forfeit. They are a little flock, gathered out from the immense community of the adversary's willing bondslaves, and from a kingdom as yet scarcely visible, scattered up and down, and divided, by his craft, into many portions. Of course, the usurper's object is two-fold: first, to strengthen his authority within his own domain, so as to place every obstacle in the way of the enlargement of the Redeemer's kingdom, by the accession of souls delivered from his thralldom, and next to weaken the little band of his successful opponents; to lure them back, if it may be, into his chains; if not, to harass, to persecute, to destroy them from off the face of the earth. To accomplish these ends, to break down the prescribed limits of his range, he wields every means within his reach; his personal power and subtlety, the legions of fallen angels who acknowledge him as their chief, and the people of this world, "the children of disobedience," in whom he works, and in whom his works shows itself in an envious hatred of all that is good. If to dishonour God be, as we know it is, the end of Satan's designs; and if to make man the instrument of so dishonouring his Creator, be, as we know it is, his delight; how great must be his triumph, when he can involve the redeemed people of the Lord in such guilt, and turn, as it were, his prison bars into weapons of offence against his righteous captor. True, it may not again enclose the souls of the ransomed in his deadly grasp; but knowing the words of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye

bear much fruit." John xv. 8. He strives to nip the tender blossoms, and to soil, if he cannot shake off, the half-ripened clusters of the true living branches. He contrives to mingle other motives with those which the Holy Spirit dictates; and if he cannot cause them to predominate, so that they who have begun in the spirit, and run well for awhile, are gradually drawn aside to follow the flesh, still he often weakens their hands by presenting to them, in a strong and alarming light, their defiled and imperfect service, and persuading them that God has forsaken them. This he did of old through his servants the false prophets, as the Lord speaks, "With lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad." Ezek. xiii. 22. As he quoted Scripture to tempt the Lord Jesus, so he will do to harass his disciples. Has not the servant of God often found himself assailed in the act of teaching, exhorting, admonishing, whether with the lip or the pen, by some such passage as that, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" Psalm l. 16, coupled with the recollection of past sins, which are washed away by the blood of the Lamb, or the sense of present infirmity, which he knows he may carry to the throne of grace, where grace is promised, and help for every time of need, by him who hath made reconciliation for the sins of the people; and "for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." Heb. ii. 18.

And he will, he does succour them. He has said, "Resist the devil and he will flee from you:" and has

thereto added, "draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you." James iv. 7, 8. Satan has great power, and he will stretch it to the uttermost in this branch of his work, tempting, harassing, discouraging, misleading the Lord's people : but there is a distinct promise given, that exhibits in a most cheering light the ever watchful care of the Most High over his poor children. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man ; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also, make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." 1 Cor. x. 13. Paul was not exempt from these fiery trials : we find him continually alluding to them in his epistles, and not unfrequently naming the source whence he knew that all proceeded. In authorizing the Corinthian Church to forgive and comfort the offending, but now penitent brethren, who had, by his command, been delivered over for a time to Satan for needful correction, he assigns as a reason for thus again receiving him, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." 2 Cor. ii. 11. And in view of the dangers to which those devices constantly exposed them, he afterwards says, "I fear lest, by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ:" then he goes on to explain that it is by means of evil teachers the enemy is most likely to assail their faith, "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ : and no marvel ; for Satan

himself is transformed into an angel of light ; therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness." 2 Cor. xi. 3, 13-15. Then, being constrained by the injustice done to his character by these lying preachers, the apostle draws a picture of his sufferings, and the revelations vouchsafed to him, ending with the chastening dispensation, the "thorn in the flesh," with which Satan was permitted to afflict him permanently. The whole epistle to the Galatians, as it turns on the subject, of mischief wrought by these "false apostles," is an exposure of Satan's wiles, and a testimony of the grief and anxiety wherewith he perpetually disturbed the zealous Paul. In the beautiful epistle to the Ephesians, the apostle confirms all the doctrinal and practical instruction of the first five chapters, by that emphatic exhortation which cannot be too often recited. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or wicked spirits) in high (or heavenly) places." Eph. vi. 10-12. He had comforted the Romans with the assurance that "neither angels, nor principalities, nor powers,"—and none but evil ones could attempt it,—“should be able to separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus ;” Rom. viii. 38, 39 ; thus always bearing in mind the limit of Satanic

power. To the Colossians he speaks with joy of having been delivered "from the power of darkness;" Col. i. 13; and with holy exultation of the work of Christ, in that "having spoiled principalities, and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it;" (ii. 15,) and warns them of the devices that may be practised to beguile them into the worshiping of angels, and other unchristian practices. He tells the Thessalonians, "We would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again, but Satan hindered us;" (1 Thess. ii. 18;) thus proving that even in designing a journey, the enemy met and thwarted him: and in the second epistle he sets forth, (chap. ii,) the particulars of that fearful apostasy from the faith which has been well described as "Satan's masterpiece," the rise, progress, and final destruction of the Papal Antichrist. The same apostasy is again foretold to Timothy. 1. Tim. iv. 1-3. The apostle also laments that Satan has already drawn some women aside after him, through idleness and tattling, chap. v. 13-15, and urges Timothy to seek the recovery of such as still remain in the snare of the devil, 2 Tim. ii. 25, 26, and after recapitulating the evil wrought against him by those whom the enemy had stirred up, among professed followers, he concludes with a triumphant assurance of his approaching, final victory and rest. The more we refer to those early days of the Christian dispensation, the better shall we be armed against what now is, and prepared for what is to come. It is indeed impossible exactly to measure the full ex-

tent of Satanic power; but this we know, be it of whatever magnitude, the Lord hath set it bounds which it cannot pass: our most holy faith is the great appointed bearer; and in proportion as we diligently build ourselves up on that, we shall be safe.

IX.

SATANIC WRATH, AS THE END DRAWS NIGH.

HITHERTO, our principal concern has been with the history of the past: we now enter upon the no less certain history of the future. To suppose that God has vouchsafed to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass, yet has shown them in such a way as to darken and perplex the honest inquirer, is to do Him great wrong. No, the word spoken is, "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it; for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Hab. ii. 2, 3.

In various parts of Scripture, but more particularly in the discourses of our Lord, shortly before his crucifixion, we are apprized of a period immediately preceding the commencement of Christ's glorious reign upon earth, when tribulation such as the world has never yet seen shall prevail, if not universally, at least

in those parts of the earth to which the general word of prophecy refers. Daniel thus speaks of it; or rather, the celestial Being who came to instruct Daniel: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time." Dan. xii. 1. This is mentioned as taking place at the time of the destruction of what we have every reason to believe is the Turkish empire; and synchronizing with the duration of that empire, is the period of 1260 days mentioned in Rev. xii. 6, at the end of which we are told, "There was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels." The whole passage has already been given, (page 24;) and the concluding words are terribly impressive, "Rejoice ye heavens, and them that dwell in them. Wo to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time," (verse 12.) The tribulation then, which excites the exclamation of "wo!" from the heavenly voice, is the work of Satan, permitted to plunge the world into one great final trouble; overruled for the purification of God's children, and the destruction of his enemies. In the message to the church of Philadelphia, which has endured to this day, the same period is probably referred to. "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon

the earth." Rev. iii. 10. Such being the declared purpose of God, and Satan being the immediate inflicter of the terrible chastisement, let us, with awe, reverence, and godly fear, yet confident in HIM through whom we shall be enabled to escape every snare, and to be "more than conquerors," approach this subject ; convinced that whatever he has caused to be written, was written for our learning.

We are told by our Lord that "wars and rumors of wars, distress of nations and perplexity," shall usher in these fearful times. War is an element that Satan must exceedingly delight in ; for it often cuts off in their sins more souls in a day than by natural death he can hope to grasp in many years. It fosters every bad passion ; its origin is in the lusts that war in our members, desiring things that in God's providence are withheld from us, and wading to them through the blood of our brethren. A hateful, an accursed thing it is ; wholly irreconcilable with the gospel, or with any one precept of the gospel ; yet Satan prevails to make "wars and fightings" not only a branch of their policy, but even a matter of boasting among nations professedly Christian. One of his first achievements in this closing convulsion, will be to put the nations in battle array, one against another, and all against God. Earthquakes, famines, pestilences, fearful sights, and supernatural signs, domestic treachery, and public hostility, are all enumerated as concurrent evidences of the time when the three "spirits of devils," (Rev. xvi. 13,) shall have entered upon their infernal mission. It were easy to speculate as to the precise nature of their

operations, and the particulars of the tremendous battle-field into which they will bring the deceived hosts ; but the subject is too solemn for such guess-work ; it better becomes us to receive with reverent thankfulness the intimations actually given, and to wait patiently the appointed time for making manifest what the Lord hath decreed. The “fearful sights” which are spoken of in such connexion as to make it plain they will be of a supernatural character, are here represented as the performance of miracle-working devils. The great Antichrist, Popery, is described as him “whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness ;” (2 Thess. ii. 9 ;) and though, in a measure, this has been characteristic of the Papacy from its first rise, still we are led to expect a very great accession of devilish power at that time, when the Lord is approaching to destroy the Deceiver with the brightness of His coming. There is, so to speak, an antagonist “coming” of Popery described when the Lord himself comes to judge and to reign: when the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, each contribute a missionary devil, invested with extraordinary powers, to tempt the kings and nations of the earth to battle against the Lord God Almighty. Great indeed must be the liberty given to the evil One when thus far he will prevail ; and that he lacks only liberty to accomplish it is clear enough. When leave was granted him to afflict Job, we have seen how his herds, flocks, servants, houses, children, and health passed away, as it were, in a moment ;

“like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.” Let Satan therefore, receive a temporary power to convulse our globe, and what fearful “earthquakes” will ensue? Let the ripening harvest be delivered up to his disposal, and “famine” will stalk abroad in forms never before witnessed; while the “pestilence” in his fierce, malignant hand, will transform the healthiest population into heaps of loathsome corruption.

God can arm his spiritual creatures with a terrible power over mortal life. The destroying angel who smote the Egyptians, is an instance of the rapid movement with which a multitude may be mown down; and it is remarkable also in being not a promiscuous slaughter, like that of Sennacherib’s army, but a careful selection made from every family in every house. An angel, too, smote the people of Israel when David had numbered them, the description of whose proceedings is awfully grand. 1 Sam. xxiv. 26. And in the next verse we are told, “David saw the angel that smote the people;” therefore to resolve it, as some attempt to do, into a figurative mode of expression, is unwarrantable: it was a real angel of God; and even such was Satan before he fell; and what a holy angel can do by a divine command, that can the foul apostate also do by divine permission.

But a far more perilous feature of these predicted times of trial, is the seduction to be practised. Satan understands the varieties of the human character; he knows there are many whom open persecution would rouse rather than intimidate, and for them, and for God’s true people, he has snares in reserve. He can

make his own murderous acts appear as the righteous judgment of the Most High. In the Revelation we are told, that the Papal beast “doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of mén,” Rev. xiii. 13 ; and that he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by means of those miracles which he hath power to do. We may naturally conclude, that his object is to assume divine authority for what he does, by bringing the destructive element down, as when the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon the cities of the plain ; for even so he wrought to terrify Job, while he stripped him of his possessions.

Domestic treachery, arming kindred hands, is also predicted—Luke xxiv. 16 ; so that a man’s foes shall be “they of his own household.” This is a very ancient device of Satan : he first rendered Eve the deadliest foe of her husband and of her whole posterity, by leading her to transgress : he then guided the hand of the first man born into the world to slay his brother : and history, sacred and profane, is but a record of his successful plots against the peace of families and of kingdoms, by means of every species of treachery. Here, as of old, he will make his delusions avail to draw the deluded into all cruelty and bloodshed. His terrible craft is able to persuade a man that falsehood is truth, and that in slaying the righteous, “he doeth God service ;” hence the snare against which the Lord most fully and emphatically warned his first disciples, and against which he also warns us—false Christs, and false prophets. We know that just previous to the destruc-

tion of Jerusalem, when, no doubt, Satan hoped to involve the Christians in the general ruin, several deceivers assumed the name of Christ, and drew away many after them : it is plain that in some way, these pretensions will again be put forth ; and we have reason to look steadily at that which is already written, lest any seeming revelation, contradictory to what is given to be our guide unto the end of the world, should be contrived, to deceive, if it were possible, the very elect. The general expectation, prevailing more and more throughout the church, of our Lord's promised coming, will doubtless furnish the cunning adversary with additional means of annoyance and destruction. Already, and for centuries past, has he proclaimed, " Behold ! he is in the secret chambers !" to the eternal loss of unnumbered souls who, believing the lie, have worshiped an idol enclosed in a box, upon the Popish altars ; deifying the senseless paste in Christ's stead, and perishing in their sin. Literally and distinctly is a " false Christ " held forth for public worship, by the " false prophets " of Rome, to this day ; and no one is justified in questioning the express fulfilment, to the letter, of all that our Lord has foreshown. Here, too, there is warrant enough in the Old Testament to satisfy the most incredulous. When the king of Israel was to be enticed to battle at Ramoth Gilead, where he fell, a " lying spirit " possessed the whole company of his prophets, so that they all predicted his success, in the name of the Lord. He, " who was a liar from the beginning," put into their mouths this unauthorized prediction ; even as he tempted the old prophet of

Bethel to deceive the man of God who came out of Judah: and in like manner the Jewish people were continually transgressing through the perfidious words of their ungodly teachers, saying, "Peace, peace," where there was no peace. There seems to be a prevailing belief among Christians, that the enmity of the last day will break forth in the form of open, outrageous infidel defiance of God and his Christ; and so it probably will to a great extent: but surely not exclusively so: Satan will not wholly give up his old craft of forging God's name and authority for deeds most desperately subversive of His laws, and insulting to His majesty. "That old serpent" retains the designation, and, no doubt, the deep, subtle plausibility which it implies, to the very moment when an elect angel lays hold on him, and binds him, and shuts and seals him up, "that he should *deceive* the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." Rev. xx. 3. And again, "When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to *deceive* the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth," (verses 7, 8.) Such considerations would render us more watchful against forms of error, creeping with serpent-like guile into the Church itself, and stealing on the unguarded points of the citadel, where, as no open enemy is descried, no adequate defence is prepared.

The extraordinary movement that, some ten or twelve years since excited universal attention, when the Scotch Church in London was considered to be the scene of miraculous manifestations of divine power,

wore very much the aspect of a preparatory manœuvre of the enemy. Some things took place that it is very hard to account for, without admitting the aid of a supernatural power ; and to suppose that power to have been of God is impossible, when we remember with what an awful heresy it was connected. That party set up indeed a “ false Christ ”—a Christ compounded of Popish and Socinian errors, a blasphemous counterfeit of Him who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The manner of bringing in this perilous deceit, was exceedingly like what the Scripture leads us to expect of Satan’s latter-day devices ; and it is remarkable, that just as the Lord placed an evident barrier to stay the farther spread of this delusion, another masked battery against the truth of Christ’s gospel, subversive, at once, of His atoning and His mediatorial all-sufficiency, was opened at Oxford, and has worked, and is working to the same end with the Irvingite heresy, only with a different kind of assumption. In the former attempt, the gospel was to be set aside by a new revelation, accompanied with attesting signs and wonders, as from the hand of its Almighty Author : under the latter system, men claim a power, in virtue of the commission delivered to the apostles, of new modeling all things : thinking to “ change times and laws,” (Dan. vii. 25,) after the manner, and on the same ground as the Papacy, that convicted child of the devil : and into which the whole thing will probably soon resolve itself, in the face of all men. These small droppings are at once a potent and a sample of the coming shower ; and we shall do well so to

regard them, and to take timely shelter under the shadow of the immovable rock.

The distinguishing mark of Satan's false Christs is, that they are only half Saviours ; man is, in some way, to make up the deficiency : and so, seeking to be justified by the law, he falls from grace—Gal. v. 4. Satan well knows how sure is that word, which received its primary accomplishment on the day of Pentecost. "It shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered"—Joel ii. 32 ; and when the final "great and terrible day" shall draw near, he will put forth all his subtlety to deceive men, that they may call on some name which can afford no deliverance, like Baal's priests ; or, as did the sons of Sceva, call unbelievably on Him who is nigh to help only when the prayer is breathed from the lip of faith.

Nor is his craft in this matter confined to the exhibition of something manifestly different from the truth : there is a way of preaching even the pure doctrines of the Bible, that will in a great measure neutralize their effects. The apostle could declare, "we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ;" and so they did, as we may perceive from the recorded sermons of these first inspired teachers, in the book of Acts : the sum and substance of their discourse was, "Flee from the wrath to come." They showed the terrors of that wrath, and they held forth Jesus Christ as the only refuge from it ; as they told of his death and resurrection, his power in heaven and in earth, and the certainty of his coming to judge and to reign. "Be it

known to you," was their proclamation to the Jews, "that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts xiii. 38, 39. To the Gentiles they declared, "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins ;" (Acts x. 43 ;) and this mode of preaching is according to the mind of God : He owns it, and blesses it ; and by its simplicity, which in the wisdom of this world is called "foolishness," he saves them that believe. 1 Cor. i. 21. There is nothing Satan dreads more than a ministry of this stamp ; accordingly he draws men away from the homely backward path, fills them with notions of their own sufficiency, persuades them that originality is a great gift, much to be coveted, and that intellect is the right door to men's souls. He points out here a Paul, there an Apollos, and in another pulpit a Cephas : whose respective hearers presently discover, each that his own minister is the very model of all that a minister ought to be, and his style of preaching precisely what is most needed. Hence we hear whispers among the separating congregations, not of conscience-stricken sorrow for sin, not of awakened praise for salvation, not of deep desire for the continued presence of him who has been (or ought to have been) visibly set forth crucified among them ; but "What a splendid discourse ! How great Mr. ——— was to day ! What eloquence, what imagery, what clear views he takes ! Certainly our pastor has no

equal among his brethren." Hence that system of sermon-hunting, which as Cecil well remarked, is little better than fox-hunting; hence the Sabbath desecration, the carriage called out to bear its owner to some favourite place of worship; the horses robbed of their assigned season of repose, the attendant domestics either excluded from, or cruelly curtailed in their share of religious ordinances; and so, too often, carnality is insensibly substituted for spirituality.

This ought not to be: an adversary hath done it, and the same adversary well knows what immense advantage he must gain by the system, when he succeeds in drawing one of these popular men aside from the straight path. Many of those who think they only follow the teacher, because he follows Christ, will be betrayed into still following him, when he has turned his back upon the Lord. Satan first infected man with his own diabolical disease—pride; and the whole turn of the gospel of Christ is to provide an antidote for that venom. And first, the preaching of the cross is a cross to the preacher, if he do it aright; for he must be content to forego much of what is highly esteemed among men, and to be nothing that Christ may be all. Line upon line, line upon line; precept upon precept, precept upon precept; the wearisome repetition of that one story, "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" that one warning, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him:" that one direction, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out:" such a mode of dealing with a world dead in trespasses and

sins, will never give the preacher undue pre-eminence among men, but it will glorify his master, and save souls.

Where now shall we go for this heaven-inspired strain? Many such ministers there doubtless are whose rule of teaching is "Christ exalted, and self-abased;" but we may more readily find the thing which Satan fears in the pages of John Bunyan, or John Flavel, than from the lips of eloquent pastors in our own day. If Paul should come to hold a visitation of what we have reason to believe was once a part of his own wide diocese, surely he would be constrained to put the searching question, "Are ye not carnal?"

We are now writing of Satanic wrath as his permitted day shortens, and his wrath does not always vent itself in explosions of rage. It works sometimes in secrecy and darkness; fierce, indeed, and cruel always but never devoid of skilful cunning to direct it. There is as much of his wrath in the speaking of smooth things, and the prophesying of peace to those with whom the Lord has a controversy, as in the greatest tumult of violence. Who shall tell the extent of that wrathful hatred against God and his fair creation, which prompted the bland insinuating lie, "Ye shall not surely die." Oh that ministers and congregations would bear in mind, equally bear in mind how great a stake the enemy has in drawing away their minds from the unadorned simplicity that is in the doctrines of the cross.

But the doctrine of the crown is another which he now struggles with all his infernal might to suppress.

A crucified Saviour, an atoning sacrifice, a mediating High Priest in heaven, he loathes to think on, or to suffer his bond-slaves to hear of; but a reigning king, about to rescue the earth from all his usurpations, to plant his throne in righteousness in the midst of his people, to send forth his word from Zion, and his law from Jerusalem. This is the very knell of Satan's departure; and to stifle the sound he will foster humility itself, or any grace by the perversion of which he may hope to seal the preacher's lips on that fearful topic. For eighteen centuries he has heard the petition resounding on all sides, "Thy kingdom come;" and he cares not how often it is reiterated, (as witness the Papacy with its everlasting repetitions of Pater-nosters,) so long as men do not inquire into the nature of that coming kingdom, or watch for its approach. An imperfect Gospel he can tolerate, and in our day that is an imperfect Gospel which omits the great truth of a speedy manifestation of the Lord from heaven. The sound of his conqueror's chariot wheels is a fearful sound to Satan; and knowing that nothing will so surely turn the attention of the Church upon himself as the heralding of Christ's approach, he will strike almost any bargain, of which a condition is the silencing of that ominous voice.

In connexion with this part of the subject, we may call to mind the parable of our Lord, where he describes the proceedings of the unclean spirit, who has left for a time his habitation, as distinguished from that effectual expulsion which God only can accomplish. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he

walketh through dry places, seeking rest ; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house, whence I came out : and when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself ; and they enter in, and dwell there : and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Luke xi. 24—26. We may be assured that attempts at such re-entrance, under aggravated forms, into every person who may appear to have been delivered from the power of Satan, will be made as the time shortens, and the enemy's rage increases ; and hence the cruel treachery that Christ's people must look for at the hands of their nearest connexions and dearest companions. Many an Ahithopel will be found ; many a Judas to revolt from his friend, and to betray his master ; and many an unsuspecting Christian will have to take up the prophetic complaint, " It was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance ; we took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. Psalm lv. 13, 14.

It is of the first importance that we should be prepared not only for an outburst of Satanic malignity and cruelty, such as was never before permitted to devastate our world, but also for a manifestation of Satanic potency, such as men are fast losing all belief in. We do not give the enemy credit for possessing such powers as the word of God distinctly ascribes to him ; we are apt to fancy that the blow miraculously inflicted on him during the early years of the New Testament church, has crippled him forever ; and we there-

fore look for nothing more, in the things that are coming on the earth, than a peculiar readiness on the part of bad men, to act upon his cunning suggestions. The consequence of this unguarded state of mind will be, that when leaders appear, assuming new ground, and confirming their assumptions by doing real marvels in our sight, we shall be tempted to receive them as Simon Magus was received of old by the people whom he bewitched with his sorceries: "To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God." Acts viii. 10. Not a few of those who held out against the Irvingite heresy in the days of its success, did so, as they acknowledged, only because its apostles failed in performing any really miraculous work. Attempts were made to raise up the dying, and to revive the dead; and their open failure cooled the zeal of some very anxious inquirers: should a similar delusion be brought forward, and such things actually effected, are we prepared to resist the evidence of sense, and to cling to the word of God alone? We shall be better armed for such a trial, by giving serious heed to what the Bible testifies in the passages here cited, and receiving the predictions in their simple, literal acceptation.

Popery is now heaping up its stately piles of architecture throughout the land, fitted, no doubt, in their secret recesses, with a vast machinery for the exhibition of "lying wonders" on a grand scale, by which many will be snared and taken: but though a principal, still Popery is not likely to be the sole manifestation of Satan in these coming horrors. Forms of error

less openly revolting than the gross idolatry of that system, but not less fatal to the soul if persisted in, will be supplied, for those who would hurl the anathema at an angel from heaven, if he dared to preach up the mass. Some will be led astray, but not finally ; for it is plainly said, "Some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end." Dan. xi. 35. And to this the apostle seems to refer, where he says of the sins and judgments of Israel, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. x. 11, 12. No vain speculation should mix itself up with this solemn subject : It is one where each believer must seek instruction how to arm himself for the great battle, in which he may expect ere long to be engaged : the word of God alone, prayerfully studied and practically applied, will show to each of us the might, the wrath, and the purpose of our adversary. It will also show us how that adversary is to be met and conquered ; even by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of our testimony.

X.

THE DOOM OF SATAN AND HIS ANGELS.

IN the sentence pronounced upon the serpent, it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise his head. A blow inflicted on the vital part indicates final destruction ; and in accordance with this, the apostle tells us that our Lord Jesus became partaker of flesh and blood, "that through death he might DESTROY him that had the power of death, that is the devil." Heb. ii. 14. We find the great enemy, first an angel, not keeping his holy estate, but becoming rebellious, transformed into a liar and a murderer, composing the ruin of this beautiful creation, and drawing a creature, made in the image of God, into deadly transgression against his merciful and glorious Maker. Still having occasional access to heavenly places, we find him availing himself of it to accuse before God those whom he had tempted into sin, and to resist the work of mercy towards man. Then, cast wholly out of heaven, we learn that he vents his great wrath upon the inhabitants of earth, and for a limited time plunges them

in fearful woes. Lastly, the doom for which he knows himself to be reserved is inflicted ; and he, with all his legions of accursed spirits, are cast into a pit of sulphurous flames, there to abide forever and ever.

The intimations given of this final judgment are many and explicit. Jude, with whose words we commenced our proofs, in those words declared the end : “The angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.” Jude 6. They are, themselves, perfectly well aware of what is coming upon them ; as St. James implies when speaking of a faith that works not by love, an acknowledgment of God’s being, power, and justice, without any sense of redeeming mercy, any conformity to his will. “Thou believest that there is one God ; thou doest well : the devils also believe and tremble.” James ii. 29. They made the same admission themselves, when terrified by the sudden appearance of their dreaded Judge. The “legion” saw him coming :—“And behold they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God ? Art thou come hither to torment us before the time ?” Matt. viii. 29. And again the unclean spirit in the synagogue,—“Let us alone ; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth ? Art thou come to destroy us ? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” Mark i. 24. On another occasion one of the devils “besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country ;” (Mark v. 10 ;) or as St. Luke expresses it, “They besought him that he would not

command them to go out into the deep ;” (Luke viii. 31.) by which must be understood the bottomless pit ; since, on having their request granted, they immediately entered the swine, and of their own accord, rushed down into the sea.

Our Lord has foreshown their dreadful doom ; in which all who remain under the dominion of Satan, must likewise partake : “ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Matt. xxv. The constant contemplation of this their certain end, must greatly aggravate the malignity of evil spirits : nothing is so hardening as despair. Their sin was unpardonable ; and Christ “ took not on him the nature of angels,” (Heb. ii. 16,) to work out for them the redemption which in his infinite compassion he vouchsafed to achieve for their wretched victim, man. There could be none to tempt Satan into rebellion as he tempted Eve to disobedience ; and how irritating must it be to a mighty, spiritual, angelic being, to see a creature formed out of the dust, redeemed from his power at so vast a price as the blood of the incarnate God, while he, and the myriads of his companion spirits are passed by—left to perish forever ! We see with what horrible rage and cruelty he used the power, for a short time committed to him, that the innocent Jesus might suffer. Most signally was he baffled ! he came against Christ to tempt and seduce, and was repelled, put to shame, and driven away : he came against him to smite and kill, and in so doing was himself destroyed ; his usurped empire wrested from him, the prey for which he had so long toiled taken

out of his net, and the mortal bruise inflicted on his accursed head. Our blessed Lord, in the immediate prospect of his sufferings, said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." John xii. 31. The result was certain, the triumph secured. He had before, in the rich success of the first Gospel missionaries, beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven: (Luke x. 18 :) now, in the contemplation of his own death, "the travail of his soul," he saw him cast out from his last refuge on earth, and about to sink into the lake of fire.

The order of events, as regards this final casting out, is very distinctly set forth. We have already seen the predictions of that short period of great wrath, when Satan and his attendant devils shall try the world with unprecedented calamities, and gather its kings and captains to battle against the King of kings and Lord of lords. At this point vengeance first overtakes him: his chosen instrument, the beast, and the false prophets that wrought miracles before him, are taken, and cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone: (Rev. xix. 20 :) and then follows the event to which the Church looks forward with such longing desire: "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand: and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that, he must be loosed

a little season." Rev. xx. 1—3. This chaining and imprisoning of Satan during a thousand years, whether they be literal years, or prophetic years of days, and every day a year, is most mercifully not revealed to us, as the most encouraging support under the trials that precede it. Christ will then have taken to him his great power, and will reign, not as a preached but as a present Saviour and King. No longer shall the perfidious enemy snatch away the seed of divine truth from the human heart, as now he does: (Matt. xiii. 19 :) no longer shall he prevail to sow his worthless tares among the true wheat of the Church; (verse 39 ;) his hateful presence will no longer vex, nor his malignant power oppress the world. Violence shall cease: "They shall not hurt nor destroy, in all my holy mountain;" (Isaiah xi. 11 ;) ignorance, superstition, and unbelief shall vanish: "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

The creatures of Jehovah shall no longer be beguiled into tempting and dishonouring their Creator, by following after false gods, or setting up stumbling-blocks of rebellious iniquity in their hearts, for "The Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day, there shall be one Lord, and his name One." Zech. xiv. 9. It is impossible to conceive the amount of happiness to be derived from the mere absence of Satan, even were no positive blessing to accompany the negative good: but since his capture and committal will be the result of His coming again into the kingdom whose right it is, we may well be glad, and rejoice

in the prospect, and comfort one another with these words.

This, however, is not a final casting out of our restless enemy : sufficient evil will yet lurk in some parts of the renewed earth for him to practise his old craft upon ; and he will have liberty so to do. “ When the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle.” Rev. xx. 7, 8. Who these nations are, or under what circumstances they will at that period be placed, we cannot possibly say. It is idle, and worse than idle, for men to guess, to predicate, to dogmatize, on matters where the most learned has no other *data* to guide him, than is vouchsafed to any babe in a Sunday school. We know that the Lord hath spoken it ; therefore we know that it shall come to pass. Satan’s prison door shall be opened, his chain removed, and immediately he will return to his ancient work of deceiving men. It is appalling to observe with what fierce earnestness he is bent on this detestable employment. His hatred of man is ever breaking out ; and what must they expect to endure, who, through their rejection of Christ’s Gospel, doom themselves to be his companions and slaves for ever ! Hell, as a place of flames and torments, “ where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched,” is invested with mystery that shrouds its terrors, and leads bold unbelievers to scoff at what they cannot comprehend ; but hell, as manifested in the character and actings of Satan, is a comprehensi-

ble and a fearful reality! To be condemned, even for a short time, to the exclusive society, and subjected to the despotic will of a person who utterly hates us, and by all means seeks our hurt, is an infliction that few would like to brave : but this is a helpless bondage forever and ever, to and with one who, as a powerful angel, must always be stronger than we; and whose torments, while we partook of them, would perpetually incite him to ten-fold ferocity against us, as a means of their great aggravation.

Satan will succeed in his last expedition, so far as the deceiving, and consequent destroying of these nations is concerned; whose number, we are told, is as the sands of the sea. "And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God, out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, forever and ever." Rev. xx. 9, 10.

Beyond this the word of God does not lead us: the secrets of that burning pit are not revealed to man. The terribleness of divine wrath, in its unmitigated inflictions, no heart can conceive, neither may tongue essay to describe it. Some have spoken of the state of the lost, as though it was one where rage and blasphemy continually poured forth their despairing defiance of the Most High. It may be so, as regards the evil spirits, but Scripture leads to no such supposition respecting the ruined souls of men. Anguish most

bitter, weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth : a full appreciation of what has been rejected, and an agonizing consciousness of what is incurred—the total absence of hope, the blackness of darkness, to be known and felt forever and ever—these are a part of what we are told will be the portion of those who believe not : the doom of such as will not obey. Let this awful glimpse of unspeakable and everlasting wo suffice ; and may the blood of Him who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot for sins, be so applied to the soul of her who writes, and of every individual who reads these pages, that they may never know, by experience, the terrific reality of what, by faith, they are assured, is reserved for the enemies of the Gospel of Christ.

II.—OF THE HOLY ANGELS.



I.

THEIR EXISTENCE AND CHARACTER.

IN the great conflicts that man has to wage with the terrible enemy to whom he has sold himself, and who labours to keep, or to regain possession of every individual soul, so long as it inhabits the body, man has but one effectual help. Unaided and alone, God, manifest in the flesh, fought the battle of redemption: he alone paid the ransom, and from him alone is all strength, all succour to be derived. There is not in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, any created thing, capable of supplying a fraction towards the mighty price of man's deliverance, nor of contributing an iota of the power by which alone he can successfully fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life. It is highly important to bear this in mind, because of the fearful abuses by which the adversary has prevailed to pervert the delightful truths that we are now about to investigate. The Papal apostasy, one of whose characteristics it is to "blaspheme them that dwell in heaven," (Rev. xiii. 6,) has established a system of angel-worship, interwoven with

every part of its unholy fabric, and carried to such an excess that it has prevailed to drive the Church of Christ into an opposite extreme ; teaching them to shrink from, or to overlook the encouraging truths that tend to the glory of God ; and which are therefore changed into a lie by Satan, that in our anxiety to shun that lie, we may lose the consolations provided for us.

Of what subsisted previously to the creation of this globe, we have but very dim intimations ; yet we know that angelic hosts looked on and rejoiced in the beautiful work. This is conveyed in magnificent language in the book of Job, where the Lord enters into controversy with the doubting and complaining, but self-justifying sufferer. “ Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ? declare if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest ? or who hath stretched the line upon it ? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened ? or who laid the corner stone thereof ; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy ? ” Job xxxviii. 4—7. It is certain from this passage, that beings, bright and holy, existed, with faculties to comprehend, and minds to rejoice in the manifestation of God’s power and goodness in creating this globe on which we dwell. They are called “ the angels of God,” Gen. xxviii. 12, “ Holy angels,” Matt. xxv. 31.

Michael seems, indeed, to be among the holy angels, what Satan is among the fallen spirits, a leader invested with great power ; and we find them personally

opposed on two occasions,—the first of which seems conclusive as to his being, however high and glorious, still a creature, humble and obedient: “Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, *durst* not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, the Lord rebuke thee.” Jude 9. Peter applies the same argument, and seemingly alludes to the same event, when treating, as Jude does, of the presumptuous evil-speaking of ungodly men. “They are not afraid to speak evil of dignities: whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.” 2 Peter ii. 11. Here the same expressions are applied to Michael, and to angels generally. He is, however, of exalted rank, as the angel who talked with Daniel plainly declared, when alluding to the mysterious contest in which he had been engaged, together with other spiritual beings, and which has already been quoted. Michael is there designated “One of the chief princes;” and the angel addressing Daniel as a seer, calls him “Michael your prince.” Dan. x. 13—21. Finally, when describing the consummation of all things, the angel says, “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” Dan. xii. 1. From all this we gather that Michael is one among several angelic beings, whom the Lord has seen fit to elevate above their fellows, and that as regards the concerns of our planet, he is probably the chief. The word archangel occurs but once more in the Bible, and there we are told, “The Lord himself shall descend from

heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God." 1 Thess. iv. 16. But Michael is named again, as we have before seen, as heading the great battle against Satan, when "there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought, and his angels." Rev. xii. 7.

The most natural inference to be drawn from what the Lord has seen good to intimate to us, is that some special post is assigned to each one of the heavenly spirits; and collectively we know what their office is. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" Heb. i. 14. One may, indeed, oversee the affairs of the kingdom, while another watches the slumbering baby in a cottage cradle, but be the office what it may, it is rendered arduous by the incessant opposition of the Satanic hosts, who are forever crossing the path and thwarting the work of those ministering spirits, to say nothing of the perverseness of those who, though by the free mercy of God they are "heirs of salvation," still inhabit a body of death, tainted by corruption, opposed to holiness, and presenting, no doubt, a painful and a perplexing spectacle in the eyes of their unseen friends, whose holy natures, full of love, zeal, thankfulness, and perfect obedience, must often shrink from the perverse iniquity of even the redeemed people of God.

Yet we know that these loving ministers take delight in our prosperity: their zeal for the glory of God must necessarily cause them to rejoice in the subversion of

Satan's empire among men ; and the knowledge that they possess of his object, the continual sight of his atrocious devices to promote that cruel object, and above all, the daily, hourly spectacle of souls passing from this stage of existence into a hopeless eternity, all tend to keep alive in their minds that compassionate feeling towards us which makes the welfare of every soul a matter of deep interest to him. Our Lord assures us that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth ;" (Luke xv. 10 ;) and there is no mistaking the affectionate tone of the angelic messenger who, with the glory of the Lord encircling him, greeted the shepherds, "Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people ;" (Luke ii. 10 ;) nor that of the various angels who announced the Lord's resurrection to the women ; "Fear not ye ; for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead ; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee ; there shall ye see him : lo, I have told you." Matt. xxviii. 5—7. This is an exquisite picture of angelic power, glory, and tenderness combined. The angel who spoke was seated on the stone that he had rolled from the sepulchre's mouth : such was the dazzling splendour of his countenance, that it shone like lightning ; and the armed soldiers of Rome "did shake and became as dead men." Yet how kindly, with what condescending indulgence, and mild assurance he encourages the

poor terrified women, dilating upon the particulars that were best calculated to inspire them with confidence and joy ! We may return hereafter to the subject ; but at present it must not be overlooked as exhibiting in a most touching light, the angelic character.

The first notice we have in Scripture of the ministry of angels is an awful one. God “placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubim, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.” Gen. iii. 24. No doubt they who had sung together and shouted for joy when earth arose beneath the hand of her divine framer, and the whole glorious fabric was completed and pronounced very good, were frequent visiters to man, encouraging and sharing with him the language of praise to their King ; and very terrible indeed to them must have been the spectacle of these favoured, beloved creatures, recently formed out of the dust, and exalted to such majesty, and endowed with such felicity, drawn aside by a device of the devil to revolt, and to bring a curse upon what God had blessed ; and their service in guarding the gate from the expelled offenders was a willing one ; for how could the Lord be insulted and they not moved to most indignant sorrow ? But although we find them prompt to execute the terrible denunciations of his displeasure, his mercy to man excites their chief joy. We shall find many proofs of this as we go on ; and while repudiating with horror the least approach to rendering them a particle of the honour due to God alone, we must be cold indeed not

to feel a glow of thankful affection towards the high and sinless beings who sympathise with us in this our low estate of guilt and sorrow, who encamp around us to watch the movements of our deadly foes, and who long to welcome us into the heavenly mansions of safety and peace prepared for us by their Lord and ours.

II.

ANGELIC KNOWLEDGE AND POWER.

OMNISCIENCE belongs to God alone: He only is the Hearer of prayer, the Searcher of hearts, the sovereign Ruler of the affairs of man. To suppose that any created being may appropriate even the minutest portion of these high prerogatives of Jehovah, is nothing short of heresy, verging on blasphemy. Its dangerous tendency is plainly shown by the apostle, who says that the worshipping of angels beguiles the Christian of his reward. Col. ii. 15. Therefore we have need to be very sober and circumspect, lest in treating of this most interesting subject, we be led, through inadvertence, into ascribing to the holy angels, any properties on which the ignorant and profane might ground an excuse for rendering to them divine honours. God has not seen fit to reveal to us to what extent the spiritual creatures, good and evil, who constantly surround us, can penetrate our thoughts. They, of course, can form a very accurate conclusion

from what they see and hear, combined with their acquaintance with the past events of our lives ; but beyond this we have no warrant for supposing that they know more than the Lord, for special purposes, is pleased to reveal to them.

One knowledge the angels do certainly possess, and that the very chiefest of all knowledge—they know God : and as the depths of the riches of His knowledge and wisdom are unfathomable, they evermore seek fresh acquisitions in that divine science. The apostle Peter, speaking of the mysteries of redemption, “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” the preaching of the Gospel, “with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,” adds, “which things the angels desire to look into.” 1 Peter i. 11, 12. And that they do look with adoring joy upon the mighty work, is manifest from their joining in the heavenly song, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” Rev. v. 12. How far they may be employed in overseeing the minute circumstances by which a sinner is often brought to the hearing of the Gospel, by entering some particular place of worship, taking up some particular book, or other similar occurrences, we do not know : but this we do know, that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one such repenting sinner. The expression, “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that *shall* be heirs of salvation,” would lead us to suppose that the children of God even previous to their effectual calling, are placed under the care of these

bright and loving creatures, whose holy nature must often be deeply grieved at the iniquity of man; knowing, as they do, the unspeakable immensity of the stake which he so daringly trifles with, and the infinite love of God, against which he so basely and insolently sins.

There is a knowledge too, which, no doubt, is revealed to the angels—that of the Lord's peculiar favour to certain individuals. Gabriel expresses this to Daniel, when about to communicate to him what the Lord had informed him of. "O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandments came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved." Dan. ix. 22, 23. And again, on another occasion, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved"—Dan. x. 11; and "O man, greatly beloved, fear not!" v. 19. In addition to this, they are unquestionably endowed with very high degrees of discerning and discriminating knowledge. In that beautiful passage, where the woman of Tekoah with such singular eloquence and effect, pleads with David, covertly purposing to soften him towards his banished son, these expressions occur:—"The word of my lord the king shall now be comfortable: for as an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad;" and again, "My lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth." 2 Sam. xiv. 17—20. This wise woman of Tekoah, whose wisdom appears to have been of a worldly description, and who was prompted by Joab,

certainly flattered the king ; but there is no reason to suppose she flattered the angels, concerning whom we are led, on much better authority, to form a very high estimate. How exquisitely beautiful are her words, in relation to the Lord's reconciling mercies ! " Wherefore hast thou thought such a thing against the people of God ? for the king doth speak this thing as one which is faulty, in that the king doth not fetch home again his banished. For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up' again : neither doth God respect any person, yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him ;" verses 13, 14. The justness of this sublime picture of man's helplessness and God's rescuing power, gives weight to what this singular woman also said of angelic wisdom and knowledge. Paul, too, refers to them, when he says, " Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Gal. i. 8 : and again : " Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and as a tinkling cymbal." 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

But whatever difficulty we may find in ascertaining the extent of angelic knowledge, of the power of the angels we are taught to form most stupendous conceptions ; or rather it is a power the greatness of which we cannot conceive. The terrible slaughter of the first-born in Egypt, was the work of one angel, and accomplished within so short a space of time, that the cry rose simultaneously throughout the land. Another dis-

play of this awful power took place, when the army of Sennacherib laid siege to Jerusalem. "Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred and fourscore and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses." Isaiah xxxvii. 36. A hundred and eighty-five thousand warriors slain with a stroke, as they lay stretched securely slumbering in their tents, was a mighty achievement ; and in like manner the visitation provoked by David's sin in numbering the people, though it is called a pestilence, was effected by an angelic hand. "The Lord sent pestilence upon Israel, and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men. And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it ; and as he was destroying it, the Lord beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough ; stay now thine hand. And the angel of the Lord stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the Lord stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem : then David and the elders of Israel who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God, Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered ? even I it is that have sinned, and done evil indeed ; but as for these sheep, what have they done ? let thine hand, I pray thee, O Lord my God, be on me, and on my father's house ; but not on thy people that they should be plagued. The angel of the Lord commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up,

and set up an altar unto the Lord, in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite. And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the Lord. And Ornan turned back and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. . . . And David built there an altar unto the Lord, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon the Lord; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering. And the Lord commanded the angel, and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof. At that time when David saw that the Lord had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there. . . . But David could not go before it to inquire of God; for he was afraid, because of the sword of the angel of the Lord." 1 Chron. xxi. 14—30. What a splendid vision is here revealed to us! A creature of surpassing strength, glorious brightness, and probably of great magnitude, standing in mid-air, with a glittering weapon, the stroke of which was instantly mortal, stretched over the holy city, which lay in beautiful repose beneath an evening sky. In the act of smiting, the angel's hand was arrested, and he stood in suspense, the weapon still flashing in his grasp, to know what farther he should do: David had offended the Lord too deeply by listening to the suggestion of Satan, to be honoured with any direct communication; neither was the angel permitted to address him, but through Gad the seer, who had announced the coming judgment on the land. The angel directed a sacrifice, and continued fully visible in that menacing position, so that the sons of Ornan

hid themselves from his terrible appearance. It was not until the smoke of the burnt-offering had ascended before the Lord, at once rendered and pronounced acceptable by the kindling of heavenly fire, that the dreaded sword was sheathed. Yet even so, its terrors remained so powerfully impressed on the mind of the king, that he dare not approach his temporary altar, from fear of the glorious being who still watched his proceedings. This is one of the glimpses afforded us of what is perpetually passing around, but which our eyes are holden from seeing. We talk of casualties, of epidemics, of contagious disorders ; but we see not the hand that with unerring fidelity deals forth each mysterious dispensation, according to the Lord's appointment. The same presumptuous folly that has clothed evil spirits with fantastically frightful grimace, has invested the holy angels with a puerile silliness of appearance, wholly at variance with every scriptural representation. Baby faces between a pair of bird's wings, destitute of bodies ; slim girls with long, flowing ringlets, and pinions well feathered—these are the imaginary likenesses of things in heaven, which we are warned not to represent to ourselves ; and the terrible-ness with which the Lord, for his own glory, has invested these ministers of his, is wholly lost sight of.

The angel who met Balaam in the way, was of a formidable aspect. The poor beast, who showed a better feeling than the mercenary wicked prophet, saw him and turned aside each time, until the narrowness of the way preventing this, she fell down, and was cruelly chastised for it by her senseless rider, whom she

was enabled miraculously to reprove. "Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand." Numb. xxii. 31. The angel's address was very severe, and his look so alarming, that all Balaam's thirst for gold could not tempt him to advance, until he received distinct permission to do so. We may be assured that the spectacle of a hypocrite like Balaam, making use of the Lord's name to forward his own selfish, unprincipled ends, and ready for filthy lucre's sake to call down a curse on God's people, or more effectually to destroy, by alluring them into sin, could not but be unsupportably odious to a holy angel, ever zealous to vindicate the honour of his glorious King; and to such a man, the face of a "ministering spirit" would be fearful indeed, if, like Balaam's, his eyes were opened to meet the indignant gaze of God's true servant.

Angelic power was put forth to shut the mouths of the hungry lions, among whom Daniel was cast to be devoured. The prophet tells us so. "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouths, that they have not hurt me." Dan. vi. 22. Daniel was indeed most peculiarly favoured by the ministry of angels, and by the intimate footing in which Gabriel appeared to place him; while the prophet's deportment toward his celestial interpreter was beautifully humble and respectful; and in his communications, which have more of a colloquial and confidential tone than any recorded in the Old Testament, the angel certainly shows himself to be a powerful warrior and champion, contin-

ually engaged in battle. "The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia." It is for man they fight; for rebel man, who is himself too generally fighting against God, or at least neglecting, with wanton disregard, those interests over which the angels of the Lord tenderly watch. Against us are arrayed principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in high places: but in the unequal contest we have great and potent allies, whom the Lord Jesus has commissioned to serve us according to our need, in warding off, no doubt, many bodily dangers not less imminent than the jaws of the hungry lions were to Daniel, though often unseen and unsuspected by us.

A simple student of Scripture, unacquainted with the received notions of poets, painters and sculptors, who should undertake to portray an angel of God, would probably represent him under a very different aspect from any that we are accustomed to connect with the idea; because we, the bond-slaves of custom ever ready to be misled by vain traditions received from our fathers, and incapable of independent thought, or rather indisposed to it, adopt the prevailing error that saves us the trouble of reflecting, and content ourselves with grotesque devils, and namby-pamby angels. Surely both are, to mortal gaze, most terrible! There are men upon earth, whose withering scowl of malignant ferocity, treachery, and reckless desolation of heart, may convey to the shrinking observer a faint idea of what must emanate from the countenance of an

evil spirit, "seeking rest and finding none," "going to and fro in the earth, and walking up and down in it," for the sole purpose of venting his cruelty on mankind: but where shall we look for the likeness of an angel? Bountiful they must be, because all God's unblemished works are so; and calm they must be, for holiness and happiness are always calm: but this earth, defiled by sin, and broken into helplessness, contains nothing to furnish us with a conception of the character that spotless purity and over-mastering power must impart to those who possess both. The expression of a very young and lovely infant's countenance is the nearest approach that earth can make to heaven: but, alas, the taint is there, though as yet comparatively undeveloped; and who could picture the feeble lump of clay arrayed in the terrors of a warrior of heaven?

Let us but examine of what class of his works the Lord principally speaks; when answering Job out of the whirlwind, he sets before him a small part of the wonders that, even in this visible world, fling man into such a fearful distance of ignorance, obscurity, and contempt. The ocean with its proud waves, and secret springs, its garment of clouds, and swaddling band of thick darkness; the horse, with his neck clothed in thunder, pawing in the valley, rejoicing in his strength, mocking at fear, and swallowing the ground with fierceness and rage. Behemoth, taking in a river with his eyes, and trusting that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth; Leviathan, making the deep to boil like a pot, with eyes like the eye-lids of the morning, esteeming iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood; these are

the works of the Almighty on which he chiefly dwells, when causing the patriarch to meditate on the greatness of his majesty and glory : and we cannot doubt that he has clothed in more than thunder the forms of his celestial hosts, engaged as they constantly are in battle with myriads of mighty opponents. The effect produced on Daniel by the appearance of an angel, and on the sons of Ornan ; on Monoah and his wife, and on the apostle John, who even after the vision of the Lord himself, and all the glories of heaven, was twice so overcome by the greatness of his angelic companion, that he fell down at his feet to worship him, all, with many other instances, tend to impress us with the belief that an angel, however beautiful, is still exceedingly awful. He is the warrior's subject of a king, whose sovereignty is resisted, and his will opposed by the wretches whom he formed out of nothing : how can the servant's aspect be that of repose, so long as his adored Master is resisted, grieved, and wronged by the insolent rebels of earth and hell ? No ! a victory has to be won, before the holy angels sheath their flaming swords, or lose the terrors of their stern and wrathful looks, now bent on every side to track the mazes of the insidious foe, and to repel him from the invisible boundary of the Lord's inviolable fold.

In speaking of angelic power, we must not exclude the property of actual, physical strength. The general opinion as to a celestial being, seems to exclude all that is material : but it is impossible to reconcile this with the facts recorded in Scripture. Shadowy beings could not have made themselves palpable to the

touch of mortal hands, as when the angels forcibly drew Lot into the house, or when they led him and his wife and daughters from the city, or when Peter felt himself smitten on the side ; or in other instances, to be enlarged on as we proceed. A body perfectly tangible may become invisible, as our Lord, whose body we know to have been truly a human body in every respect, repeatedly proved ; and that our insensibility to the presence of these ministering spirits, is the effect of blindness on our part,—probably the consequences of our sin,—we learn from the prayer of Elisha, who, desiring to pacify the young man's fears, did not ask that a heavenly guard might be sent to assure him, but only that his eyes might be opened to see what was actually present. Our Lord says, that in the resurrection his people shall be “equal unto the angels.” Luke xx. 36. Now, we know, to a certainty, that men will rise with their bodies: that this mortal shall put on, not immateriality, but immortality—1 Cor. xv. 53 ; and if angels are incorporeal spirits, certainly there must be either an inferiority or a superiority to those with whom it is expressly said they shall be *equal*. Bodies like those which we now inhabit, in substance, they probably have not, although we have sufficient proof that all which we call the laws of nature, may be suspended or reversed at the divine will, without working any change in our natural frames: as in the case of the three Jews, who walked unharmed in the midst of the fiery furnace of Babylon—Dan. iii. 27 ; and the prophet Ezekiel, who was lifted up and borne through the air—Ezek. iii. 14 ; and Jonah, who re-

mained uninjured for three days and nights in a place when in much less time, according to those laws of nature, not only would his life have departed, but the framework of his body become decomposed and utterly changed into corruption. Jonah i. 17. The scepticism of the human mind renders us willing rather to explain away the most unequivocal language into shadowy figures, than to submit our vain reason to the omniscience of God ; our shallow philosophy to his omnipotence ; and though the most delicate petal of a tiny flower, or the tinted particle that our rude touch brushes from the butterfly's wing, cannot subsist without nutriment, conveyed by divinely-formed mechanism for its support, we are unwilling to think that when the Holy Ghost, in reference to the manna, says, " Man did eat angel's food," (Psalm lxxviii. 25,) there is any ground given for supposing that angels are actually nourished by substantial aliment. We would start no new theory upon this subject ; neither will we receive any, however firmly established on human authority, that will not stand the test of Scripture. We believe that the unseen world is of a much more tangible quality than is commonly supposed ; that angelic forms are not made of vapour, neither are they, when rendered visible to man, optical illusions. We know that " all flesh is not the same flesh ; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, and another of fishes, and another of birds : there are also celestial BODIES, and bodies terrestrial ; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." 1 Cor. xv. 39, 40. That the celestial body is

nourished, we have many indications in Scripture. Our blessed Lord, speaking of the future state, says to his disciples, "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me ; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom ; and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Luke xxii. 29, 30. When we consider into what surpassing fragrance and beauty the coarsest elements of earth and water are transformed by their mysterious circulation through the delicate frame-work of a plant, we may readily divest our minds of all that pertains to the grosser act of eating and drinking, and the common properties of such nutriment as man is accustomed to take, and believe that in heaven as on earth, the brightest, most perfect of the Lord's works is hourly dependent on his sustaining mercy, formed by his power, upheld by his grace, and nourished by the rich provision of his bountiful care.

III.

ANGELIC OBEDIENCE.

THERE is not, in the whole Bible, an instance where an angel appears to act independently of the divine command. Perfect submission is the unvaried character of the heavenly host. Our Lord expresses this, in the prayer that he has taught us to use: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." When John would have worshiped the angel who showed him the wonderful things that he has recorded for us, he was prohibited in these words: "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book." Rev. xxii. 9.

We cannot doubt that the Holy Spirit has so framed the word of truth as to be a perpetual antidote to every form of error that should creep into the world: and the "worshiping of angels," which constitutes a prominent mark of the Romish apostasy, is provided against by continually setting forth their entire dependence and subordination. They never appear but as messengers:

“God sent an angel into Jerusalem to destroy it.” 1 Chron. xxi. 15. “My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.” Dan. vi. 22. “The man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” Dan. ix. 21. “At the beginning of thy supplication the commandment came forth, and I am come.” (v. 23.) “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth.” Luke i. 26. “Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews,” Acts xii. 11: and in the last instance that is recorded by inspiration of an angelic mission, we read, “I Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the Church.” Rev. xxii. 16. However willingly performed to men, it is still a service appointed of God, and by him especially directed; they are “ministering spirits,” sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation,” Heb. i. 14; and it is on this principle of holy obedience that we find them zealously executing God’s righteous displeasure against the rebellious.

When the way to the tree of life was to be closed against fallen man, cherubim were set to guard the entrance, and with their flaming sword rendered it unapproachable: when that way was again to be thrown open, and the twelve manner of fruits yielded in their season, and the leaves to be applied for the healing of the nations, twelve angels are represented as standing

at the gates that are never to be shut, day or night, not armed to bar the passage, but as guards of honour welcoming the happy comers to that scene of everlasting felicity. The variety of commissions which we know the angels to have executed among men, sufficiently attest their prompt obedience to every command of their glorious King, whom to serve is their privilege and joy : for “he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven.” Dan. iv. 35. “Thinkest thou,” said our Lord to the disciple who smote the high priest’s servant, “thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than ten legions of angels ? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ?” Matt. xxvi. 53, 54.

We now proceed to review the instances of angelic interference, not already exhibited in these pages, as they occur in the Holy Scriptures : and as the work of vengeance is in no way consonant to the character of a holy angel, except when executed in loyal obedience to the command of his righteous King, who will punish evil-doers, we may class under the present head all the destructive operations of the heavenly host. In the song of Deborah, we have a curse sternly denounced, in language highly expressive of this feeling. “Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.” Judges v. 23. The Lord needs no help of men or of angels ; yet the armies of heaven stand around, eager to be employed against the enemies of his name and of his people ; and to withhold the hand

when such work is to be done, seems to them so hatefully unthankful, as to draw forth the most emphatic anathema against such offenders. To render a recompense to those who afflict Christ in his members, is indeed a part of angelic office, as David shows ; when speaking of those who sought to destroy his soul, he says, "Let them be as chaff before the wind : and let the angels of the Lord chase them. Let their way be dark and slippery, and let the angel of the Lord persecute them." Psalm xxxv. 5, 6. In virtue of this office, they will fulfil their terrible commission in the last days of the present dispensation. "The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xiii. 42. They will come fully prepared for the terrible work of that great day : "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you ; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. i. 6, 7, 8. He "who maketh his angels spirits ; his ministers a flaming fire," (Psalm civ. 4,) has pre-ordained them to act a most conspicuous part in the transactions of the last days, when they will execute judgment with unerring obedience, and rid the earth of those whose presence upon it is a blemish and a curse. For a more particular description of the part taken by angels

in the ministry of wrath, we must turn to the book of Revelation, where a scene of awful magnificence is opened to us, in language of unparalleled grandeur.

The apostle saw, amid the mysterious splendours of the heaven which he was permitted to view, seven angels standing before God, having each a trumpet in his hand, the sounding of which was to let loose upon the earth a succession of woes very terrible to experience. In regular order, according to the command that had been given, each angel blew the trumpet ; and when it came to the turn of the sixth, he was directed to loose four angels that were bound in the great river Euphrates, and who, of course, were evil spirits, having power given them for an appointed season to destroy men by means of a people over whom they obtained control. Interpreters expound this of the Saracens ; but our business is with those who seduce their minds and govern their movements ; and these are Satanic spirits, loosed for the purpose by one of the angels of God. Rev. ix. 13—19. After this, the apostle witnessed the great battle, in which Michael and his angels vanquished the dragon and his host, and drove them from heaven. Of the combat no description is given, for however the mind of John might be expanded and strengthened to sustain the tremendous vision, ours are not so fitted ; and we should sink under any attempt to realize it. If the sight of one mighty angel of God preparing to execute judgment on a city was so terrible to David as we have seen it was, what must have been the rushing to war of myriads in their most tremendous array ; the personal

encounter of two such hosts, one battling for the continued possessions of "high places," where they retained unspeakable advantages, the other nerved to expel those infernal rebels and intruders from the presence of God.

We were told by our Lord, (Matt. xiii.,) that the reapers are angels; one is represented to us here as having a sharp sickle, to whom another angel who had power over fire, cries with a loud voice, "Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horses' bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." Rev. xiv. 18—20.

But greater judgments remained; and the seven last plagues with which a guilty world should be visited, were committed to seven angels, who are represented as fulfilling their mission with more than passive obedience, if we may judge by the stern interest with which the result of their proceedings was watched by their heavenly companions. When the third vial was poured out upon the rivers and fountains of waters and they became blood, John continues, "I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shall be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for

they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments." Rev. xvi. 4—7. But in no part of the inspired word do we find such a display of angelic indignation and high displeasure as in the chapters which follow immediately upon this. The occasion of this strong exhibition is the rise of that very system which has exalted the angels into objects of worship; and we must refer to the powerful principles of perfect obedience implanted in their spotless bosoms the extreme wrath with which they regard this blaspheming apostasy. "There came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither, I will show unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication," Rev. xvii. 1, 2. Having taken him into the wilderness to show him the typical representations of Papal Rome, the angel proceeds to explain to him the mystery, ending with an assurance of her coming dissolution. "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power and the earth was lighted with his glory: and he cried mightily with a strong voice saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird." Rev. xviii. 1, 2. Another voice from heaven summons God's people out of her, and adds, "For her sins have reached unto heaven, and

God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and render unto her double, according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. How much she hath glorified herself and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her." Verse 5—7. These are terrible denunciations from the lips of a holy, loving angel: they show how abhorrent to all godliness is that great mystery of iniquity which assumes to be the only true religion of Christ. How stern is the following apostrophe uttered by the same angelic voice, in the view of her terrible desolation by flaming fire! "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her!" Verse 20. Yet another exulting spirit comes forward to swell the triumph. "A mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it in the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall the great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." Verse 21. In the following burst of solemn rejoicing, the angels are no doubt included: "And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Allelulia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgment; for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornications, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Allelulia." xix. 1—3. "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelulia: for

the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Verse 6. It was in the midst of all these glorious sights and sounds that John fell down to worship the dazzling creature, who is represented as being one of the seven angels holding the seven last plagues and whose reply so remarkably harmonizes with the Lord's declaration that his risen saints shall be equal to the angels. "I am thy fellow-servant, *and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus*. Worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Verse 10.

There are two classes of persons to whom the foregoing passages of holy writ may convey a serious and salutary warning. One consists of those who denounce the study of unfulfilled prophecy as needless if not dangerous; thus indirectly charging God with placing a snare in our way, and of baiting it with the promise of a blessing to such as shall fall therein; they do not consider that what they set aside is called by inspiration "The testimony of Jesus." Moses, Isaiah, David, and the rest of the Old Testament seers, are allowed to have testified of Jesus, foreshowing what should be the nature, what the object and effects of his first coming into the world; and why, when they and the New Testament writers also, set forth the signs, and judgments, the glories connected with his second coming, should we be told to avert our eyes, to close our ears, and to resolve that until we see we will not believe? Speculative, no doubt, such studies are; for according to our great lexicographer, to speculate, means "to meditate; to contemplate; to take a view of any thing with the mind;" and in this sense faith

itself is a speculative thing : God has fitted our minds to behold, to embrace, to rest upon " things hoped for things not seen ;" and it is the highest privilege not only of nature but of grace so to do. Paul prays concerning his Ephesian Church, " That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him : the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of your calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." Eph. i. 17-19. Shall we then thrust from us one of the greatest means of acquiring this knowledge, and forget that " the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy ?"

The other class comprises those who regard it as a breach of Christian charity to speak with confident gladness of the final, utter, eternal overthrow of Popery, as an event near at hand ; or as a thing not to be anticipated at all. They do not consider, perhaps they do not believe, that while they are speaking smooth things of Popery and hoping good things concerning it, that foul apostasy perpetually replenishing hell with lost souls provokes the wrath of God, and fires with holy indignation the pure angels of heaven. The charity in which such well-meaning Christians boast themselves is not the charity of the Bible. Love to souls is what the Lord inculcates ; and proportioned to our love for the soul will be our unextinguishable hatred of that which betrays and destroys it. Babylon the great, the system that arrogates to itself the

title of the holy Catholic Church, that assumes to be the mother and mistress of all churches, and to anathematize all without its pale—this great Babylon deliberately sins against light and knowledge ; holds the Bible and withholds it from her slaves ; professes Christ, and blasphemes him ; raises an edifice seemingly on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, and fills it with idols, thus committing and drawing all her votaries all over the world to commit what God declares to be spiritual adultery, most hateful, most insulting to him. The angels who are represented in the Revelation of St. John as loudly exulting over the violent fall of this antichristian power, have been ministering spirits to those who in the dungeon, on the rack, and amid the flames glutted her murderous cruelty with their life-blood, and glorified the Lord Jesus by rejecting, with abhorrence, her sacrilegious rites. We cannot now enter into the depths of their feelings in the contemplation of her fearful doom : but we, if we belong to Christ, shall see what some of us now refuse to think of ; and shall be constrained to glorify God by rejoicing over the fallen enemy of his kingdom and of his people ; for “in righteousness doth he judge, and make war.”

Babylon being thus doomed and destroyed, it remains but that all the enemies of Christ should assemble for a final overthrow ; and here we have another splendid image presented to us. “I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, come and gather yourselves together unto the supper

of the great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." (xix. 17, 18.)

The last act of the militant angel, distinctly recorded in Scripture, is one which we must all look forward to with joyful anticipation. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand : and he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled." (xx. 1, 2, 3.) What part the holy angels will take in the scenes that are to close earth's history, we are not told. The loosing of Satan from his prison will lead to another outbreak of human wickedness ; but fire coming down from God out of heaven is named as the instrument of the rebel's destruction ; and in the awful judgment that follows, no mention is made of angelic ministry in the execution of God's terrible decree on those who are not found written in the book of life. Thenceforth nothing but harmony, joy, and the peace of heaven, will remain for the angels and those who are made equal to them. We have done with the dispensation of wrath, and now go back to the commencement to trace out the many instances in which Scripture reveals them in the sweet and gracious offices of love and protection to the people of the Most High.

IV.

ANGELIC MINISTRY.

WHEN treating of angelic ministry, we must bear in mind the sympathy which exists in their bosoms, for the angels know themselves to be by nature liable to fall, even as Adam was; and that the same electing love which raises the sinner, and sets him in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, also preserves them from the guilt and condemnation of Satan and his crew. The rejoicing that takes place in heaven when a soul is brought to God in penitence and faith, is a proof of this; and we shall find, as we go on, many indications of tender sympathy on the part of the angelic ministers of God's mercy to man expressed by so much condescending gentleness and delicate consideration, as we may truly call it, for the weaknesses of our poor fallen race, that when we divest an angel of his fabulous characteristics, and picture him to ourselves the exceedingly majestic, formidable creature that Holy Scripture describes, we may well feel our hearts melted into grateful affection for these our glorious and

highly privileged "fellow-servants." May the Creator and Preserver alike of angels and of men, be with us to direct, to guard, and to bless our inquiries into the precious record of these angelic ministrations of mercy and love!

The first instance we meet with is that of Hagar in her desolation and distress, brought on herself by despising her mistress. A fugitive, alone, and friendless, she had reached a fountain of water, and there rested; probably unable to choose a path in that desert. "And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence comest thou? and whither wilt thou go?" She could not answer the latter part of the interrogatory, and to the former she gave a reply that included no acknowledgment of her own misconduct; "I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarai." No reproof was given: not a word of reproach for her rebellious offence, but what was implied in the answer, proving how well the celestial speaker knew the actual circumstances of her case. "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell

in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?" Gen. xvi. 7—13. There is a difficulty here that often meets us in similar circumstances: the speaker is an angel of the Lord; yet the latter part of his address is delivered as in the person of God himself; and Hagar evidently considered that the voice was that of the Lord. In some cases we know that he is spoken of under the term angel: though in the appearance of the burning bush, where Moses says, "The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the middle of the bush," he presently adds, "when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I." Exodus iii. 2—4. So that it may be supposed he first saw a glorious angel, and afterwards heard the voice of God himself. This seems at first to be confirmed by Stephen's narrative: he says, "There appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai *an angel of the Lord*, in a flame of fire, in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight; and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers; the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Acts vii. 30—32. Yet presently afterwards he adds, "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness, with the *angel* which *spoke* to him in Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us," verse 38. And once more,

he says, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears . . . who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it," (verses 51—53,) and the plural is again used by Paul: "If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him? For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." Heb. ii. 2—5.

By collating these passages we may learn caution in pronouncing that, when the Bible tells us an angel appeared or spoke, it was God who appeared or spoke: and we may also remember that the prophets very frequently make abrupt transitions from speaking in their own persons to speaking in the Lord's, without the usual preface, Thus saith the Lord: and we can readily suppose a created angel, fulfilling the office of an ambassador from the Most High, may do the same thing, delivering his Master's message in his Master's words; and so occasioning us to draw conclusions not warranted by the text. The instances in which we are undoubtedly to believe that by the term angel our Lord Jesus is meant, are Gen. xlviii. 15, 16, where Jacob says, "God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long to this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads;" and in that remarkable passage, Exod. xxiii. 20: "Behold, I send an angel be-

fore thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place I have prepared. Beware of him and obey his voice, provoke him not : for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak ; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries." This could hardly be spoken of any created being ; and we know that the provocations of the Israelites in the wilderness are called by St. Paul "tempting Christ." 1 Cor. x. 9. These cautions recorded, we may be satisfied to proceed, with the plain word of inspiration to guide us.

The three men who visited Abraham as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day, (Gen. xviii. 1,) are nowhere called angels ; but there can be little doubt that two of them were the same who immediately afterwards went to Lot, in Sodom. This we know, that it is distinctly said of Abraham, in reference to this event, "The LORD appeared unto him ;" and that in the subsequent part of the narrative the LORD is represented as communing with him, and is repeatedly named. We will not intrude into what the Holy Spirit has so closely veiled, but proceed to the next chapter, where we are not left to guess at the nature of the persons spoken of. "There came two angels to Sodom at even," (Gen. xix. 1,) evidently in human form, for Lot, as Abraham had done, proffered hospitable entertainment, and pressed it upon them with earnest importunity : the whole story shows that Lot had then no suspicion of their being other than mere mortal men, and that so far from needing his generous, self-devoted protection, they had

power and authority to destroy the place, which was only respited until he and his should be delivered. Considering how wholly Satan and his infernal crew triumphed in those guilty cities, and how perfectly conscious of their presence and influence the holy angels must have been, their patient abiding in such a place, the purely defensive nature of the miracle which they wrought, and the deliberate manner in which they proceeded to extricate the favoured individuals committed to their charge, are very striking. Unmoved by the tumults in the streets, continuing all night, they quietly awaited the break of day, for Lot was not to quit the place unseen, or under the cover of darkness, nor to leave his ungodly sons-in-law unwarned ; and so long as he staid, his presence was a protection to the cities, and to every sinner in them. The mission of the angels was two-fold, first to deliver the godly, then to destroy the ungodly ; and this renders it so lively a type of the great day of the coming of the Son of man, when the angels will be sent to gather his elect from the four quarters of the earth, previous to the terrible destruction that shall fall upon his foes. The angels expressly said to Lot, " We will destroy this place . . . the Lord hath sent us to destroy it," (verse 13 ;) and again, " I cannot do any thing till thou become thither." (verse 22.) Yet they expressed anxiety, as though delay endangered him ; " Escape for thy life : look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain : escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." (verse 17.) It is lovely to contemplate the earnestly devoted spirit in which these blessed creatures fulfilled

their office, even forcing deliverance upon those who were loth to quit a spot containing their worldly substance, their kindred, and neighbours ; alienated from God as the latter were by their wicked works. The fate of Lot's wife is remarkable, and as being peculiarly instructive, our Lord has commanded us to remember it when the time comes of which this deliverance was symbolical. She clung, it is true, to the hand of an angels, but she disobeyed God ; and her celestial guardian could not avert the penal consequences of her offence. This may prove a lesson to three classes of people : angel-worshipers, worldly-minded professors, and unbelievers in what the Lord has revealed of his coming judgments. He makes his angel the means of our escape from danger, but leaves it not in their power to preserve a hair of our heads from his righteous visitations : he saves us from among the ungodly, in answer to the prayer of faith, but is not pledged to continue to us the good things of the world on which our hearts are set : and if, through unbelief, we stagger either at his promises or his threats, we break our covenant with him, and leave our souls to be gathered with the ungodly.

The next instance of angelic interposition, is the memorable one of Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son ; and here we have the ambassador speaking indeed in the first person, but with the explanatory clause, "Saith the Lord." "And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto

him ; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. . . . And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven a second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son ; that in blessing I will bless, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars in heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." Gen. xxii. 11—17.

When Abraham instructed his faithful steward Eliezer to seek a wife for Isaac from among his kindred, he confidently assured him that the Lord would send an angel before him to prosper his way ; and this the servant repeated to Rebekah's family, when relating the extraordinary manner in which he had been guided. Gen. xxiv. 7—40. It is a beautiful instance of prayerful faith on man's part, and an answering providence on that of God. Eliezer was directed, and his way was prospered in a most marvelous manner. And why marvelous ? because of our unbelief, which rarely can attain to such child-like reliance on the promises of God, or we should continually experience the same proofs, that what he hath promised he will also perform.

Jacob's vision has already been noticed : he saw a ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to heaven ; and the angels of God ascended and descended upon the ladder. The interpretation of this is seen in the declaration of the Lord, who stood above the ladder,

and who repeated the glorious promise—"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Gen. xxviii. 14. The incarnation and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, is the procuring cause of what we are now considering—the ministry of those angels who could never have worn towards man any other aspect than that of stern, irreconcilable hostility, had man remained under the dominion of Satan, to do forever the work of his conquering master. It was through the dying and rising again of the Son of God, to be accomplished in the fulness of time, that angels could find a medium of friendly communication with earth; and Jacob knew this, assuredly; for his was the saving faith described by Paul, "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1.

The cloudy pillar had an angelic attendant. "The angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them, and it came between the camp of Israel and the camp of the Egyptians." Exod. xiv. 19, 20. We can hardly read this without remembering what Gabriel said to Daniel, of Michael the archangel, calling him "the great prince that standeth for the children of thy people." No doubt there were myriads of those celestial warriors seen afterward on the mountain of Dothan; but they had a leader appointed of God: and of him it is said afterwards—"I will send an angel before thee; and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, and the Hittite, and the Perrizite, the Hivite,

and the Jebusite." Exod. xxxiii. 2. And to prove that this was to be really a created angel, the Lord also says—"For I will not go up in the midst of thee, for thou art a stiff-necked people; lest I consume thee in the way." Exod. xxxiii. 3.

We meet no more with angels, until Balaam's alarming encounter, which does not come under this head; and then we lose sight of them again, until the people being securely settled in the promised land, and proceeding, as usual, to provoke the Lord by their disobedience, they are strongly reprov'd, yet with much mild dignity, by a commissioned minister. "An angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swear unto your fathers: and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars: but ye have not obeyed my voice: why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you: but they shall be as thorns in your sides; and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice and wept." Judges ii. 1—4. Although the purport of this message was menacing, the tone was very gentle, and the remonstrance, "Why have ye done this?" following close on the remembrance of God's faithfulness to his great promises, was well calculated to melt the people as it did; so that for a time they returned to their duty, and served the Lord; but

revolts ensued, and deliverances were granted on their temporary repentance, until on another provocation, the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian for seven years. The children of Israel, greatly oppressed and impoverished, cried unto the Lord; and then followed this interposition: "There came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abe-ezrite: and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the wine-press, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? But now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." It does not appear that Gideon suspected the celestial character of the person he conversed with: indeed, it is certain he did not; and the respectful style in which he addressed the stranger must have resulted from perceiving in him so much of dignity, as demanded it; while an equal degree of benevolence in this aspect, doubtless led to so frank a tone, in answering one who might be a spy of the enemy. The narrative proceeds:—"And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my

father's house. And the Lord said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." This seems to have excited Gideon's hope that his companion's was indeed a message from the Lord: probably he took him for a prophet. "And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry until thou come again. And Gideon went in, and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour: the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Take the flesh, and the unleavened cakes and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh, and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God: for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the LORD said unto him, Peace be unto thee, fear not: thou shalt not die." Judges vi. 11—23.

After this remarkable interview with an angel messenger, we find Gideon receiving communications direct from the Lord himself; but the way in which he was prepared for these revelations was exceedingly beauti-

ful. The angel probably appeared as a wayfaring man, since we read of the staff that he had in his hand ; and the language in which he addressed the young thresher of wheat, was exquisitely adapted at once to encourage and to prepare him for fuller manifestations of the divine favour. After this, we hear of no more angelic visits : the language is uniformly, " The Lord said unto Gideon," and under the immediate direction of Jehovah, he wrought all his stupendous exploits, delivering Israel, and preserving peace within her borders to the end of a long life.

There is something remarkable in the frequently abrupt transitions from the description and language of an angel to the presence and the voice of God himself. We have seen this in the first communication made to Moses, from the flaming bush ; and surely it is at least equally consonant with reason and Scripture to suppose the Lord graciously prepared his weak, sinful creatures to hear His voice, and to be sensible of His special presence, by this method of heralding Himself, as to insist that when an angel is distinctly named, the Lord Jesus is the person intended. It is dangerous to put arbitrary interpretations on God's words, for which we have no direct authority from Himself ; the determination fully to comprehend and account for " secret things," which " belong unto the Lord our God," may lead to presumption, to " foolish and unlearned questions," and perhaps to very dangerous errors connected with the person and office of the Lord Jesus : while by receiving in its most obvious sense what the Holy Spirit has moved his servants to write

for our learning, we cannot greatly mistake. An inspired apostle has told us, that the created angels are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation." We find throughout the Old Testament, and in the book of Revelation, angels constantly described as engaged in this very work; and why should we question their identity? why persist in understanding the greater part of these descriptions of angelic ministry as referring to Him of whom it is especially testified that "He took not upon Him the nature of angels." Heb. ii. 16.

Gideon being gathered to his fathers, and Israel, as usual, continuing to revolt, and to provoke the Lord, they were repeatedly chastised by the hands both of foreign and domestic tyrants. At length, after more than one generation had passed away, the gracious and merciful God whose Holy Spirit they grieved with their iniquities, prepared to raise up another deliverer, and sent a heavenly messenger with the tidings. The history is remarkable, and deserves particular attention. Manoah, a Danite, had a wife who was barren; "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman, and said, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now, therefore, beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: for lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines. Then the woman came and told her husband, saying,

A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible: but I asked him not whence he was, neither told he me his name." Judges xiii. 3—6.

Here we see that the angels, on such occasions, appeared in a perfectly human form, so as to be taken for mortal men; but there was that in their countenances—probably the emanation of minds perfectly holy, obedient, and faithful, and habitually engaged in the contemplation of the Deity—which, to the corrupt nature of fallen man, appeared "very terrible." To such "beauty of holiness" had the countenance of Moses attained, while wholly separated from earth, and the grosser elements of man's ordinary sustenance, having "seen God" for forty successive days on the mount. So, likewise, shone the face of Stephen, on the very verge of that martyrdom which was peculiarly honoured in being the first under the Christian dispensation. The woman does not appear to have taken the angel for more than what she called him, "A man of God;" a prophet; and the expression that she used in describing the majesty and brightness of his aspect was not an unfrequent one, in days when angelic faces were not so strange upon earth as now they are. We, probably, associate no idea of terribleness with that trite expression, "an angelic countenance;" we know not, alas! what man has lost, even in outward show, by revolting from his God.

Manoah's wife went on to repeat exactly what the angel had said: "Then Manoah entreated the Lord,

and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born." A beautiful instance of simple faith! He makes no question of the matter, refers it all to God, and speaks of the child, which as yet existed but in the divine promise, as though it was even then about to be born. We may safely assert that Manoah was a man of prayer, who thus calmly, thankfully received the answer, to his accustomed supplications. The lovely and instructive history proceeds: "And God hearkened to the voice of Manoah; and the angel of God came again unto the woman as she sat in the field: but Manoah her husband was not with her. And the woman made haste, and ran, and showed her husband, and said unto him, Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day. And Manoah arose, and went after his wife, and came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am. And Manoah said, Now, let thy words come to pass! How shall we order the child, and how shall we do unto him? And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Of all that I have said unto the woman, let her beware. She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I command her, let her observe. And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, I pray thee, let us detain thee, until we shall have made ready a kid for thee. And the angel of the Lord said unto Manoah, Though thou detain me, I

will not eat of thy bread : and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering, thou must offer it unto the Lord. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the Lord. And Manoah said unto the angel of the Lord, What is thy name, that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honour?" It is impossible to pass over this grateful, and doubtless patriotic sentiment, for Manoah would have proclaimed that there was a prophet in Israel, and have sent his oppressed, afflicted, guilty countrymen to inquire of the Lord at his mouth. There is a nobleness in the language of this Israelitish pair the more striking from the simplicity and humility that accompany it. His request was not granted. "The angel of the Lord said unto him, Why asketh thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" The margin reads, Wonderful : and because "Wonderful" is one of the names by which our blessed Lord is called, some have assured themselves that it was Christ himself who spake. We see no ground whatever for the assumption ; the angel Gabriel announced to Zacharias the promised birth of a son in his old age ; one far greater than Samson ; and he too was sent to Mary with tidings infinitely more important than either : it is surely, therefore, too much to catch at a single, doubtful word, to introduce the Lord of angels on such an occasion as this. Considering how prone the Israelites at that time were to idolatry, the very reason of Manoah's question was sufficient to prevent his obtaining an answer. The holy angel would not give his name to be enrolled among the new gods of Israel. "So Manoah took a kid with a meat-offering, and of-

ferred it upon the rock unto the Lord ; and the angel did wondrously ; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground. But the angel of the Lord did no more appear to Manoah and to his wife. Then Manoah knew that he was an angel of the Lord. . And Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God.” The greatness of the miracle, and his surprise at discovering the celestial character of the Being with whom he had so familiarly conversed, were such that he went beyond the mark, as he had before fallen short of it, and imagined that he had, instead of a mere prophet, seen Him whom none can look upon and live. His wife’s encouraging reply is admirable : “ If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have shown us all these things, nor would as at this time have told us such things as these.” Verse 23. They would not have received instructions as to the bringing up of a child yet unborn, if their own lives were about to terminate ; nor could it be in wrath that the Lord had made known to them purposes so gracious towards themselves, and towards the whole nation who were to have a deliverer in their offspring, whose birth and destiny were probably thus intimated in order to impress men’s minds more deeply with the assurance that the promised deliverance was wholly of the Lord.

V.

ANGELIC SYMPATHY.

UNDER this head may properly be classed those peculiar ministrations that had reference to the prophets of Israel, from Elijah onward ; and, following the order in which they stand in the Bible, in preference to the chronological dates, we will briefly note them all. It will be remembered that the angel who showed the Apostle John the glorious things by him recorded, declared, " I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren the prophets ; and of them which keep the sayings of this book : " (Rev. xxii. 9 :) from which we may at least gather, that the interest taken by that heavenly guide in these wondrous revelations, was intense. When, therefore, an angel is deputed to communicate with an inspired prophet, we feel that there is somewhat more than a general ministration in it ; the divine knowledge which the celestial being is commissioned to impart to his earth-born brother fills his own mind, and he appreciates the high distinction conferred on

himself, as the vessel chosen to contain and to convey a treasure of which all the excellency is of God. The glory of its Master is concerned in what he communicates ; its prospective fulfilment interests him deeply, as tending to show forth the Lord's faithfulness ; and arrayed as he perpetually is against the dark, subtle enemies of man, he rejoices in every accession of strength, wisdom and knowledge gained by his poor, feeble ally. To one who is accustomed to dwell upon those beautiful portions of Scripture, the tenderness that bespeaks perfect sympathy is constantly apparent on the angel's part ; together with an alacrity that shows how much heart the divine creature puts into his work.

First among those we have now to notice, stands the touching picture of Elijah, weary, exhausted and well-nigh despairing, in the wilderness. He had been very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts, even to the braving of Ahab's power and Jezebel's hate. He had openly defied, most signally disgraced, and with determined justice had slain the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal in the sight of all Israel ; whom he believed to be, with the single exception of himself, forsakers of God's covenant, destroyers of his worship, and murderers of his prophets. Throughout this transcendent work of faith and zeal he had not flinched ; but now pursued by the sanguinary menaces of Jezebel, and believing that every man sought his life, the solitary outcast stretched himself under a juniper-tree, and, asking for death, became overpowered by sleep. With what pitying tenderness must the angel's heart have yearned over the unconscious slumberer, while employed in

the humble office of baking a cake on the coals, and filling a cruse with water to place beside him ! What a spectacle of want, and sorrow, and destitution, did the prophet present, immediately after that glorious display of triumphant faith and power on the sides of Mount Carmel ! When all was prepared, “ the angel touched him, and said, Arise and eat.” 1 Kings xix.

5. Having done so, the prophet again laid down, and slept : “ And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat ; because the journey is too great for thee.” He not only sets before him the nourishment provided, but graciously and tenderly urges on him the necessity of strengthening himself for the unusual exertion. Often have the afflicted children of God found comfort in this sweet record of his watchful care, and of the willing service that the holy angels render, when no human hand can help. When, under the pressure of bodily privation or mental anxiety they are hearkening to the suggestions of Satan, and murmuring to, if not against the Lord, some ministering angel is on the wing, bearing the succour they need, the comfort they pine for ; and putting to shame the language of their unbelieving minds.

Elijah, we are told, “ went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb, the Mount of God.” 1 Kings xix. 8. Whether that day’s repast was made sufficient for the whole period, or whether his strength was daily renewed by a miraculous supply of bread and water, like that of his fathers in the wilderness, is not made plain : in either

case, the Lord fed him by the hand of a ministering spirit, and he whom God fed could know no want : he whom God strengthened, no weariness. He fulfilled his mission, not without further communion with angelic helpers ; for though, in general, the expression is, “the word of the Lord came to Elijah,” without specifying the medium through which it reached him, we are told when Ahaziah sent to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, concerning the event of his disease, “the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite—Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria,” and told him the prophetic words that he should speak to them. 2 Kings i. 3, 4.

Elijah’s translation into heaven was by “a chariot of fire, and horses of fire,” no doubt forming a part of the magnificent array of which we are next to speak as belonging to the armament of heaven : for when the servant of Elisha, terrified at the sight of the besieging host of Syria compassing the city, cried out, “Alas, my master ! how shall we do ?” the prophet’s answer was, “Fear not ; for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” In answer to his prayer, the young man’s eyes were opened ; “and he saw ; and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.” 2 Kings vi. 15—17. Angels are not mentioned here ; but however the blaze of the glory might enwrap, and so render them invisible, we may be sure it was not of chariots and horses that Elisha spoke when alluding to the number of his unseen allies. We may rather suppose the scene to have

resembled what is very glowingly described by a first-rate poet of our day, in referring to this passage :

At the word rushed a cloud
From the crown of the sky :
In its splendours the sun
Seemed to sicken and die.
From its depths poured a host
Upon mountain and plain.
There was seen the starred helm,
And the sky-tinctured vane ;
And the armour of fire,
And the seraph's broad wing ;
But no eye-ball dared gaze
On the pomp of the blaze,
As their banner unfolded
The name of their KING.

After Elisha, Isaiah had proof of the being, the brightness, and the benevolence of God's angels. He has related a very remarkable vision : " In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim : each had six wings ! with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts : the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, wo is me ! for I am undone ; because I am a man of unclean lips : and I dwell in the midst of a

people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." Isaiah vi. 1—7.

This sublime vision was the preparation for that wonderful strain of prophecy which has caused some, not inaptly, to term Isaiah the fifth evangelist. It was Christ's glory that he saw, and it was of him that he spake—(John xii. 41;) and this bright company of the seraphim were veiling their faces with awe before Him who was despised and rejected of men. In the midst of their solemn alternate song of adoration, the voice of a conscience-stricken man was heard, bewailing his sinfulness, and lamenting over his undone estate, the uncleanness of his lips, and the guilt of his people. Immediately a seraph is commissioned to remove his grief; and he, with the earnest alacrity that we have remarked, *flies* to the distressed seer, bearing not only a message, but a token of reconciling, sanctifying grace, repeating the impressive assurance, "thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." It appears to have been in the material temple in Jerusalem, that this revelation was made; but it is very remarkable how much the temple imagery prevails in representations of heaven itself; even in the descriptions given by John, who wrote in an especial manner for Gentile churches. In this vision of Isaiah, He was present who gives substance to the shadow, efficacy to

the means ; and a coal from off the altar was used, typical at once of the purifying influences of the Holy Ghost, and of the flaming zeal that should burst forth in strains of glowing eloquence from the prophet's now-consecrated lip. This is the only place in the Bible where our translators have introduced the word *seraphim*.

We next come to the mysterious revelations made to Ezekiel, who uses the appellation "*cherubim*," in describing the heavenly beings whom he saw. It seems, so far as our dim faculties may penetrate the mysterious veil, as though these were a peculiar order of angelic creatures. The title is constantly given to those appearances which the Lord instructed Moses to place at each end of the ark of the testament, over the mercy-seat of which they extended their wings ; and who are nowhere called by the general term of *angels*. Their station, we may venture to think, is one of more immediate proximity to the throne of glory than that of others ; both from the position assigned to them in the material temple, which we are told was a figure of the true, or heavenly house of God, and from the descriptions given by Ezekiel. Cherubim also were placed at the gate of the garden of Eden, to wield the terrible sword of flame which barred all approach ; keeping the way to the tree of life. It is a most inviting field for the imagination to rove in, these glimpses of the heavenly territory, and its angelic inhabitants ; but imagination must not enter where we are humbly following the footsteps of inspiration, to speak according to the word of the Lord, neither more nor less ;

and we must be content to believe, without expecting fully to understand, what the prophet was enabled to convey of his own impression of those things which he beheld ; so far, at least, as he makes distinct mention of beings whom we are taught to consider as a part of the armies of heaven. Whether or not, these appearances were real ; whether the angels are ~~im~~material, invisible essences, and therefore impossible to be seen by us in their natural state, and only clothed in the semblance of something tangible for occasional revelation to man, or whether the weakness of our powers, defiled and debilitated by original guilt, shuts them out from our mortal ken, is a point that never will be fully cleared up until we come to know even as we are known ; but there is quite as much to be said for the latter as for the former proposition, although the weight of names is certainly against us ; men having inherited the opinions of their predecessors as a matter of course, and battled for all as belonging to them by rightful descent. By such means have successive generations been blinded to the meaning of many a rich promise and glorious prediction now on the eve of fulfilment ; and the consequence of such mistaken impressions is but too likely to be that complained of by the prophet :—“ Lord, when thine arm is stretched out, they will not see ! ” Most ingenious explanations have been affixed by various commentators to the minute particulars recorded by Ezekiel of the visions that he beheld ; but with these we have nothing to do ; our business being with the literal descriptions.

Ezekiel, being among the captive Jews carried into Babylon, was commissioned to bear to them many re-

bukes and remonstrances, mingled with most glorious promises, from the Lord. In his first chapter, he gives a full account of the appearance that he beheld ; which is thus introduced :—" A whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire unfolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance ; they had the likeness of a man." He proceeds to describe the four faces, four wings, and other peculiarities of these living creatures, who, he says, " ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning ;" and of the immense wheels that were beside them ; the crystal firmament that was directly over their heads, and the appearance of a sapphire throne placed above all, " and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it." From the Lord, whose glory he thus beheld, he received a message to his people, the children of the captivity : and having thus given an outline of that which he beheld, the brightness of the objects being so dazzling that he could but speak of " the likeness of the appearance " as it then impressed his mind, he records in his eighth chapter a farther revelation made to him in the presence of the same mysterious glory, when he was taken to behold the various idolatrous abominations practised in Jerusalem to provoke the Lord, and shown also the terrible judgments about to fall upon the offenders. An angel, described as " a man clothed with linen, having a writer's inkhorn by his side," is sent through the city, to set a mark upon the foreheads of the men who

sighed and cried for the abominations that were done ; and six others, each with a slaughtering weapon in his hand, then proceeded to slay all who were not so marked, beginning at the sanctuary. This being done, and reported by the man in the linen garment to Him who sat on the throne, “ he spake unto the man clothed with linen, and said, Go in between the wheels, even under the cherub, and fill thine hand with coals of fire from between the cherubim, and scatter them over the city. And he went in my sight. Now the cherubim stood on the right side of the house, when the man went in ; and the cloud filled the inner court, Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and stood over the threshold of the house ; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord’s glory. And the sound of the cherubim’s wings was heard even in the outer court, as the voice of the almighty God when he speaketh. And it came to pass that when he had commanded the man clothed with linen, saying, Take fire from between the wheels, from between the cherubim, then he went in and stood beside the wheels. And one cherub stretched forth his hand from between the cherubim unto the fire that was between the cherubim, and took thereof, and put it into the hands of him that was clothed with linen ; who took it, and went out.” x. 2—7. The conclusion of the vision is thus related : “ Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim : and the cherubim lifted up their wings, and mounted up from the earth in my sight : when

they went out, the wheels also were beside them : and every one stood at the door of the east gate of the Lord's house : and the glory of Israel was over them above." (verses 18, 19.)

The word *cherubim* signifies flaming ones ; and we find either flame or its concomitant, a cloud of smoke, generally present, when the Lord was pleased to manifest himself, under the Old Testament, either in the temple or to his people apart from it ; we are also told that the second coming of our Lord in great glory, accompanied with the holy angels, shall be in "flaming fire." We have just enough information respecting this order of the celestial servants of our God to believe that they have some special office of peculiar attendance on their King. David says, "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly," (Psalm xviii. 10 ;) and again—"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels : the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." Psalm lxviii. 17. We may compare such expressions with the chariots and horses of fire seen by Elisha's servant, and that which took up Elijah into heaven ; and without intruding improperly into things not seen, we may be allowed to believe that glimpses have been given into realities hereafter to be fully known and understood, while the assurance that such glorious intelligences do exist, and in great multitudes surround us, fulfilling each the will and rendering prompt service to their Master and ours, is most soothing to the child of earth who, exiled from the bright company of sinless beings, pursues his way in loneliness of spirit, often feeling as though throughout

the wide creation there was no being to sympathise with him now, though he may look forward to such communion hereafter as disembodied spirits can together enjoy.

Ezekiel had another vision, in which an angel showed him marvelous things : things that to this day are unfulfilled, and concerning which the church remains in greater perplexity than in almost any other prophetic matter. Having been brought in the visions of God to a very high mountain in the land of Israel, he says, "there was a man whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed." Ezek. xl. 3. This divine messenger measures out and describes to the prophet with most minute exactness, a city and a temple of which we as yet know nothing ; but it is a marvelous instance of prediction and direction, continued through no fewer than eight chapters, by the means of this angelic instructor, who almost appears identical with the angel described by St. John, as employed in like manner for his instruction.

We now arrive at that lovely portion of Scripture, the book of Daniel, and may trace more at large what has already been repeatedly noticed. Daniel was greatly favoured by direct revelations from the Lord : the king's dream and its interpretation were made known to him, to the conversion, as we may hope, of the once proud and blood-thirsty tyrant, Nebuchadnezzar. In like manner, he was enabled to show forth to the miserable Belshazzar his coming doom, with the downfall of great Babylon, the vivid prototype of that

idolatrous harlot-city, Rome, which in our day rules and riots, and ripens for sudden destruction. Under Darius, the prophet again enjoyed such favour, influence and command, as moved to envy the selfish princes of the kingdom. They sought occasion, but found none, to carry an unfavourable report against him, to his royal patron : and at length they were driven to the expedient of inventing an offence, that Daniel was sure to commit, by making it penal to pray to the God of heaven. The device succeeded : Daniel prayed repeatedly and without disguise ; and a few hours saw him cast into a den, where hungry lions were impatiently awaiting their accustomed meal. We are not introduced to that scene of peril, of darkness, and of horror—the noisome abode of ferocious beasts of prey ; strewed with the splintered bones of the many human victims that Babylonish cruelty delighted, even as its antitype delights, to prepare for barbarous slaughter. We only know, that after remaining there during the night, the faithful servant of the Lord was able to answer the king’s sorrowful inquiry, by saying, “ My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.” Dan. vi. 22. He had other company than the ravenous beasts, who were thus chained back into the innocuous character that they bore in the garden of Eden, and to which they shall again be restored, when the Conqueror of sin and of death comes to reign over a renovated earth. The darkness of the dungeon was no doubt chased away by the same “ bright light ” that shone around Peter in his prison ; and angelic con-

verse cheered the hours, while the noble beasts were crouching around, unconscious whence arose the calm, under the influence of which their ferocious feelings were so lulled that a lamb might have lain down among them in safety. The angel had doubtless power to intimidate, and forcibly to restrain the ravenous beasts ; or the terribleness of his aspect might have awed them into trembling submission : but it is more consistent with the loving, compassionate disposition of an angel, when dealing with those who are not at enmity with God, to use gentleness, and to bring peace.

But it was in the course of his prophetic visions that Daniel has related the fulness of angelic communication repeatedly made to him. These visions, in point of time, preceded his deliverance from the lions ; the first being in the first year of Belshazzar. Here, the rise of the little horn, the Papacy, was revealed ; and its final destruction is thus awfully described. " I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool : his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued, and came forth from before him : thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him : the judgment was set, and the books were opened. I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake ; I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." Dan. vii. 9—11. Troubled and grieved at the myste-

riousness of these fearful things, the prophet "came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this," (verse 16,) and he received an interpretation, distinct and full, setting forth the grand outline of this world's history, until the glorious termination, when "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High ; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Verse 27. Whether the interpreter in this instance was the same who afterwards became his teacher, Daniel does not say ; but when at the end of two years another vision appeared, he says, "It came to pass when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice, between the banks of Ulai, which called and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. So he came near where I stood ; and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face : but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man ; for at the end of the time shall be the vision." (viii. 15—17.) This is the first time we have mention made of Gabriel, the honoured messenger of so much mercy to man ; but indeed the latter part of the book of Daniel brings us more in contact with angels than any that precede it ; enabling us to form, as it were, an acquaintance with those whom we humbly hope to associate with through eternity.

Some years after this, when Darius had been made

king over Chaldea, Daniel, computing the time revealed to Jeremiah, found that the restoration of his people to Jerusalem could not be far distant, and accordingly set himself to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, the promised mercy. He made a touching confession of sins, personal and national; pleaded the cause of God's afflicted exiles, and implored the removal of his chastening—the renewal of his former love to Israel. The prayer is one that we cannot too generally adopt, in reference to the present state of the Jews, and the sure word of prophecy which testifies that their second restoration is now drawing nigh. Having continued in this beautiful prayer for some time, the prophet says,—“And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplications before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.” Dan. ix. 20—22. The sequel has already been quoted: and the revelation made to Daniel is so conclusive as to the time, the object, and the consequences of our Lord's first coming, that the Rabbinical teachers to this day withhold that part of God's word from their people, assured that it must at once enlighten them on a subject where, being themselves in darkness, they earnestly desire to keep their brethren shrouded from

the light of day. Three years afterwards, when Daniel again was fasting and mourning before the Lord, another revelation was vouchsafed to him, more full, comprehensive, and remarkable, than any we can point out ; for it embraces a period commencing with Daniel's time, and stretching out to the end of all things. The vision which he saw is very mysterious ; one of the descriptions so closely resembling that which John gives of his glorified Lord, that we must pause to apply it to a created angel. "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz : his body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude." Dan. x. 5, 6. This vision was unseen by Daniel's companions ; "but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves." He was left alone, and fell into a trance : and in this state, "Behold a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words which I speak unto thee, and stand upright : for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling." Dan. x. 10, 11. It appears that there may have been a change of persons here : we are not told that the speaker was the same with him whose glorious appearance so overpowered a man accustomed to awful sights of heavenly splendour, and whose presence, though unseen, was so

felt by his companions, as to send them trembling to a hiding-place. This last circumstance has no parallel in any record of the kind ; for in all other cases the individuals were terrified only by what they saw and heard. We would, however, be reverently cautious in deciding a matter infinitely too high for any child of man. When this last speaker had spoken farther, and told him of the opposition made by the prince of the kingdom of Persia, and the help given to him by Michael, and added that he was about to tell what should befall the Jewish people in the latter days, Daniel says,—“ And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips ; then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my Lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength : for how can the servant of this my Lord talk with this my Lord, for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not : peace be unto thee ; be strong, yea be strong.” Dan. x. 15—19. It is probable that this angel was Gabriel who had used language exactly similar on a former occasion, as being sent to instruct him, the man “greatly beloved.” He proceeds to relate the wonderful things that it pleased the Lord to reveal for the comfort and encouragement no less than for the instruction of his church ; and as we are told, “In the mouth

of two or three witnesses shall everything be established." Such confirmation was added to the angel's assurance, "Then I Daniel looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on this side the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. And one said to the man clothed in linen which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever, that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end." Dan. xii. 5—9.

When we read of things being shown in a vision, we are apt to regard it as all the imagery of a dream; and those who find it difficult to realize to themselves the actual existence of spiritual beings, always apply the word vision as opposed to what it actually imports: they interpret it to mean not something seen, but something not seen: a mental phantasmagoria, unreal, and easily produced by a disordered state of the bodily functions, affecting the brain. This, of course, no believer can for a moment venture upon connecting with any thing declared in Scripture; but many seem to think that what the inspired writers are described to have seen of angelic beings, was only a sort of alle-

gorical representation ; a vehicle for conveying to their minds certain impressions concerning the divine will and purpose. So far from agreeing in these phantomizing interpretations, we believe Daniel to have truly seen with his bodily eyes the angels of God, even as the keepers at the sepulchre and the disciples saw them at the Lord's resurrection ; and as we shall all see them when he comes in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels. God can speak to his servants without any such intermediate agency, as we find in a multitude of instances throughout the Scriptures ; but in some cases he has seen fit to employ one or more of the heavenly host, and has also commanded his witnesses to record it for our instruction. We surely owe it to our Divine Teacher to receive with thankful humility and undoubting credence, what he has vouchsafed thus to reveal to us of the interest taken by his angels in the concerns of men ; and to believe that a book, not one thing contained in which may we dare to take away or to alter, the whole being given by the inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that such a book is not a volume of riddles and allegories ; but is a plain, comprehensible declaration, no less of what we are to believe than of what we are to do.

VI.

ANGELIC INTEREST IN THE JEWISH PEOPLE.

It may appear strange to devote a separate section to this subject, seeing that the whole is, so far, essentially Jewish : but we live in a time so peculiar, and the portion of the Old Testament which remains to be considered, bears so directly upon what we in our day look for, while it primarily treated of a former and very partial work of mercy, that we must especially point it out. Zechariah was cotemporary with Daniel during the later years of that great prophet's ministry ; and in the abundance of the prophetic revelations made to him, he was scarcely less favoured : but his visions have this distinguishing mark, that they refer almost exclusively to the literal restoration of the literal Israel to the land which God gave unto their fathers, and to their seed after them, for an inheritance to the end of the world.

Daniel sometimes beheld several individuals of the angelic legions uniting their testimony as to the divine authority of what was declared to him ; but Zechariah saw them in larger numbers, and astir with great viva-

city in the work of preparation for the return of his people from captivity. It is a glorious spectacle that this sublime book opens to us, and may well shame our cold-heartedness in a cause so dear to the inhabitants of heaven. For our example, no doubt, as equally for the encouragement of Israel after the flesh, is all this written down; and howsoever we may delude ourselves by the so-called spiritualizing of these things, if not to the exclusion at least to the national extinguishment of the Jews as a separate people, we shall yet find that a literal accomplishment will be given to every word which the Lord has spoken of, or to, the natural descendants of Jacob—yea, that one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away, until all be fulfilled.

We cannot fully enter upon the extraordinary instances of angelic kindness, and we may call it affectionate freedom of discourse, displayed in the book of Zechariah. He begins by relating, "I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind them there were red horses, speckled and white. Then said I, O my Lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will show thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." Zech. i. 8—11. It has been decided by expositors in gen-

eral, that the man who stood among the myrtle trees was the Lord Jesus; and this decision seems to be grounded on the sequel: "Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me, with good words and comfortable words." (Verses 12, 13.) Christ being the one appointed Mediator between God and Man, it is alike vain and sinful to seek the intercession of any created being; but are we therefore justified in denying to the angels a privilege that we know from holy writ the spirits of the redeemed enjoy? John heard the souls of them that were slain for the testimony of Jesus, asking how long it would be ere their blood was avenged on them that dwelt upon the earth; and surely an angel might venture to remind the Lord that the time spoken of by Jeremiah, threescore and ten years, was now come to an end; and to ask how long it should be ere he would have mercy on Jerusalem, and on the cities of Judah, which were to be rebuilt and inhabited again. In the first year of Darius, Daniel made his accepted prayer, grounded on his understanding by the books that the number of the years revealed to Jeremiah was almost fulfilled: and in the second year of Darius, Zechariah hears an angel remarking the same thing, in a tone of reverential entreaty.

Surely those holy, zealous servants of the Lord are not less concerned than we are for the glory of his name, and confusion of his enemies in the exact per-

formance of all his gracious promises. The Lord having answered the angel that talked to Zechariah "with good words and comfortable words," the purport of that answer was joyfully proclaimed by the angel; who then dictated to Zechariah what he was to declare in the Lord's name, of his merciful purposes to Zion, and his sore displeasure "with the heathen that are at ease." The angel next showed the prophet a symbol of the power of the Gentiles, scattering Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem; and of the destruction that awaited them for so doing.

It is very beautiful to mark the bustle and joyous activity among the heavenly hosts, when the Lord's purpose of immediate mercy to his people and his land was made known. "I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and beheld a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein: for I, saith the Lord will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her." Zech. ii. 1—5. A splendid strain ensues, expressive of the coming revival, and more distant triumph of Israel in Jerusalem; after which, says the prophet, "He showed me Joshua the high-priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

And the Lord said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan : even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee : is not this a brand plucked out of the fire ? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel." Zech. iii. 1—3. Whoever is meant by this angel before whom Joshua stood, one thing is certain ; we have here the great adversary himself in person resisting the re-establishment of Israel as a nation, and the LORD silencing his malignant opposition, and repeating the blessed assurance, that the brand which he desired to consume was, indeed, by the Almighty arm, plucked from the burning. Joshua was then re-clad, and a mitre placed on his head, " And the angel of the Lord stood by : and the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; if thou wilt walk in my ways," &c. The prophet appears to have been lost in the contemplation of the things then promised to his beloved people, but he was recalled to witness further wonders : " The angel that talked with me came again and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou ?" (iv. 1.) He sees some typical objects : and with the respectful freedom that the condescension of his guide was well calculated to encourage, he asked, " What are these, my Lord ? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be ? And I said, No, my Lord ;" (verses 4, 5.) The same form of interrogation, and an explanatory reply from the angel, occurs again five times ; exhibiting most beautifully the indulgent temper of the holy an-

gel, who continually invites inquiry, and evidently takes a high pleasure in making everything known to the prophet. The very expression used by our angel to another, "Run, speak to this young man," when the word to be spoken was an assurance of the coming restoration, abundance, and security of Jerusalem, indicates a feeling perfectly similar to that with which we would all hasten to communicate to a beloved friend any tidings of especial gladness and advantage. It gives rise to reflections, that ought at once to awaken our gratitude, and doubly to increase our zeal; for surely we cannot make light of such indications of sympathy on the part of creatures who have far less cause than we to rejoice in the Lord's returning love to his ancient, chosen people. The angels who, at different periods of his wonderful history, communed with Abraham, and made known to him, on some occasions, the will of the Lord, which at other times he knew by direct inspiration—those very angels, with all the perfection of memory belonging to their high natures and faculties, never impaired by sin, are watching the fulfilment of every tittle of what was then foreshown. He who, by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, pointed his drawn sword over Jerusalem, and gladly sheathed it at the command of her forgiving Lord, still looks upon her desolations, and yearns over the royal city of David, trodden under foot of the Gentiles; while a sword, more destructive than that which he wielded in the three days' pestilence, is upon her children from generation to generation, consuming not merely the life of the body,

but extinguishing also that of the soul. Gabriel, who so minutely set forth to Daniel the dates of things which were to come, is watching for the time when Michael, the great prince that standeth for the Jewish people, shall "stand up," and bring the afflictions to an issue. He who reminded the Lord that his indignation against Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, had already burned on to the predicted threescore and ten years, is waiting now to see the days fulfilled, when a far longer and fiercer visitation of the divine displeasure shall have an end, and one angelic messenger may hasten another to run with the glad tidings of pardon, of jealousy for Jerusalem, of sore displeasure against the heathen who are at ease, and of the final fraying of every horn of pride that has contributed to scatter Judah and Israel. We naturally take a livelier interest in events of which we have ourselves seen the commencement, and fully expect to see the termination, than in those which began before our days, and are not likely to come to an end till we are gone. Thus it is that we may in some measure comprehend the feeling of earnest expectation with which the holy angels must regard the winding up of this world's history, the creation whereof, in its bright, unclouded morning, called forth their songs and shouts of joy. Every word of God to man was spoken in the presence of spirits both good and bad; and while the devils, who themselves are constrained to believe, and tremble, would fain retard the accomplishment of the Lord's merciful purposes, by stirring up the vile principle of unbelief, rebellion, and ingratitude in man's heart, the

angels, though they can have no sympathy with unholy, unthankful, disobedient men, yet mourn over the delinquency that originated in the successful wiles of a powerful and subtle foe, and long for the time when their King shall take to himself his great power, and reign triumphant over the earth, according to the sure promises, which they have often been commissioned to repeat and reiterate in his name. Regarding with holy indignation the work of malignant sin, as wrought by their apostate fellows in a creature once so fair and so good, they rejoice in the presence of God over even one repenting sinner, and celebrate each individual triumph of divine grace, as an earnest of what is ultimately to be accomplished throughout the whole earth. The glory of the Lord is intimately concerned in the exact fulfilment of every word that he has spoken; and no marvel if "the angels desire to look into" the gradual development of that mighty plan which is known to none but God alone, except as far as he has foreshown it in prophetic revelations, and gradually brings it to pass in the sight of angels, of devils, and of men.

All this we know from the sure word of God; and can we doubt of their intense interest in that particular family which for a long period of time constituted their only care? We say their only care as regards this earth; for throughout the Gentile world the system of devil-worship prevailed, all being sunk in idolatry; and it is morally impossible that with such the angels of God could have any fellowship, or behold without horror those detestable perversions of human intellect,

those bold strivings against the inward law of man's conscience, that refused to acknowledge the glorious Creator in his visible works ; and, turning his truth into a lie, gave that honour to stocks and stones, to beasts, reptiles, and their own vilest passions, embodied and deified, which was due alone to him who gave them rain and sunshine, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. The only work that we can suppose the angels to have been engaged in among the heathen nations is that which we believe they are continually performing throughout the whole world—the bearing away from earth those rescued souls whose clay tenements are dissolved in infancy ; and who, not having sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression—that is to say, knowingly and wilfully, are yet laid under the sentence of bodily death—while the all-atoning blood of the Lamb is applied to them, canceling the original debt, and they are eternally saved. This we firmly believe to be the case with every human being who dies in infancy ; not that their quitting the body before they have wilfully sinned gives them any title to heaven ; but that God, who will surround his throne with a great multitude whom no man can number, out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue, sets the seal of his electing love on a certain number, and takes them away ; such early departure not being the cause but the effect of their salvation. Over these, we may well believe the angels have an especial charge, tenderly watching them during their transitory sojourn in the flesh, perhaps communing with their spirits, which

though yet unable to act by the bodily functions, may be free to hold high and glorious intercourse with the unseen world—to us unseen—and then rejoicingly taking charge of their liberated souls, as our Lord informs us they did that of Lazarus, who “died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom.” Luke xvi.

But with this exception, we repeat, one family of the human race monopolized the favouring care of the heavenly hosts during many successive generations. The angels cannot move a step, save as commissioned by their King; and he says to the people of Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” Amos iii. 2. They alone were the recognised objects of his love; to them only were committed the revelation of his will: they were chosen, called, preserved, led, and by a succession of miraculous mercies, forgiven their transgressions, because of them, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to come; and because to them the gift and calling of God which are without repentance, insured a pre-eminence of national privilege forever.

And what a pre-eminence of privilege do they now, through the long period of the Gentile dispensation and their own dreadful depression, enjoy? Gigantic empires have arisen, and towered on high, and crumbled into dust: Babylon, the queen and the hammer of the whole earth, is broken, and become heaps of burnt rubbish, and pools of stagnant mud. Of Nineveh no trace remains, by which to identify its very site; Greece,

Persia, survive in name, but what now are the men whose fathers ruled the world? Rome indeed continues, and rules, but how? the battle axe and weapons of war have been superseded by the monk's cowl and the harlot's cup; and she is reserved to light up with the blaze of her burning the scene of Israel's predicted jubilee. In the midst of all these changes, the Jew abides the same; in every particular the same as when God led him up out of Egypt, with one creed, one language, one liturgy, one sorrow, and one hope, he is found in every corner of the globe, a severed fragment of that exquisite design which the Lord shall again arrange as of old, to be the beauty and the glory of earth. Other people have changed their gods, which be no gods, and assimilated themselves to the abominations of neighbouring or invading unbelievers; and even Christianity, apart from the Papal apostasy which wholly unchristianizes itself, has separated into so many varying sects and denominations, that, to a superficial or ignorant observer, it appears to consist of a multitude of religions, each contradicting the rest; but in the midst of this stands Judaism, a blighted, but still a stately tree, unaltered in form and undiminished in size by the visitation that has bound up its sap, and shriveled the once verdant leaf into dryness and corruption. Upon this noble ruin is fixed the eyes of the angelic squadron, the Maranaim who once met Jacob on his mysterious way; who surrounded the march of his descendants when traversing the depths of the sea, and the paths of the wilderness that so long shut them in;

who heralded the presence of the Most High, when in clouds and darkness, with mighty thunderings and bursting flames of fire he descended on Sinai to commune with a man of that unspeakably favoured and privileged race, and to establish a covenant with the whole people of Israel. Those angels well knew that the covenant is as immutable as the ordinances of day and night; and that though their offences be visited with the rod, and their iniquities with scourges, yet the Lord will not utterly withdraw his loving kindness, nor suffer his truth to fail. Blighted and dishonoured as the leafless tree may appear in the sight of man, they know that the Lord hath said it shall again strike root downward, and bear fruit upward; and that the glory of the coming deliverance and final honour shall so exceed whatever the people of Israel have aforesaid enjoyed, as to cause even the stupendous miracles of their wonderful beginning to be comparatively forgotten. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, the Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them, and they shall dwell in their own land." Jer. xxiii. 7, 8. These declarations are disbelieved or explained away by men, and the hope of poor Israel is esteemed a vain thing, while yet walking in darkness and having no spiritual light, he stays himself upon this word of the God of his fathers; but the angels,

well knowing that word is not yea and nay, look forward with earnest expectation to the triumphant proof of his faithfulness with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.

We have no reason to suppose that the angels knew beforehand how our Lord would be rejected of his own when he came into the midst of them. Many among the Jews, like Hannah and Simeon, were waiting for the consolation of Israel : and when the aged believer held the child Jesus in his arms, and proclaimed him a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel, it is probable that, like the disciples after our Lord's resurrection, and even after he had opened their understanding to understand the Scriptures, he expected the kingdom to be at that time restored to their nation. Such would be the impression on the minds of the angels, so far as we can judge ; and the joy with which the messages were borne successively of the approach of his forerunner, of his own conception, and of his birth, was undoubtedly a joy in which the chosen people of God, the Jews, were a very principal object. When Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the temple, and announced the honour about to be put on the house of the aged priest, he said of the promised child, " And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." Luke i. 16. It was in the Jewish temple, in the midst of the Aaronic rites, and standing beside the altar of incense, that this bright angel was revealed to the officiating priest ; and surely the heart of Gabriel must have glowed with

holy joy, while remembering the promise that the glory of that latter house should exceed the glory of the former, immeasurably as it came short of it in external and internal magnificence ; and a measure of resentful displeasure might well mingle itself with his gladness, when the chilling doubt of Zacharias was opposed to his declaration. The language of his reply is exceedingly lofty : "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God ; and am sent to speak to thee, and to show thee these glad tidings." Luke i. 19. He could not but remember Daniel's simple faith and holy joy, when welcoming his more dim and distant communication of things that should come to pass long after the prophet's departure. Daniel's language was not, "Whereby shall I know this?" but, "O my lord, how long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The angel proceeds to inflict the gentle but necessary chastisement provoked by the old Israelite's want of faith. "And behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not be able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season." Luke i. 20. Here he seems abruptly to have departed.

Six months after, the same zealous angel was despatched on a mission for which the heart of each one who reads these pages, whether Jew or Gentile, ought to send up a song of thanksgiving to the Lord. It strictly belongs to this branch of our subject, since it was most peculiarly and exclusively a Jewish event, so far. He in whom all the families of the earth were to

be blessed, was emphatically the seed of Abraham ; and we shall see how peculiarly this was marked in the language of Gabriel. He “was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, *of the house of David* : and the virgin’s name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women.” This glowing and beautiful salutation, so expressive of delight in the honour to be put upon the simple maiden of Israel, and in the stupendous mercy about to be shown to man, has been perverted into an atrocious piece of blasphemous idolatry by the apostate Church of Rome, which like Satan himself, chooses the holiest things to pollute, and to make occasions of sin. Gabriel, seeing her troubled and perplexed at such an address from so glorious a personage, proceeded to encourage her ; and telling her of the Son whom she was chosen to bear, he said, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto him *the throne of his father David* : and he shall *reign over the house of Jacob* for ever.” Luke i. 32, 33.

Now it is certainly very difficult, with any respect for scriptural example, or any regard to the inspired phraseology, to take that expression, “the house of Jacob,” otherwise than as literally signifying the actual descendants of that patriarch. Believers of every nation are the children of Abraham by faith : they are spiritually called Israel in some passages : and Jeru-

saalem which is above is the mother of us all ; but "the house of Jacob" is as definite in its meaning as is "the house and lineage of David;" and we have just as much right to make a figure of the latter as of the former.

Our Lord's personal ministry also was so far exclusively among the Jews, that when the Syro-Phenician woman besought him to heal her daughter, he answered, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel : nay, he so far established the exclusiveness of the Jewish son-ship, up to that time, as to add, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs." Moreover, if those were Gentiles who came from the East to seek the new-born King of the Jews, the revelation of his birth being made to them not by angelic messengers, but by the appearance of a star in the visible heavens, and that when they were to be warned not to return to Herod, it was by an intimation from God in a dream, confirms the fact, that so far the family of Israel after the flesh was that branch of mankind on which the angels of God fixed their regards, and to whom they ministered, and concerning whom they anticipated most glorious things. When Joseph was minded to put away Mary, an angel satisfied him that she had in no way deserved the suspicion that he naturally harboured concerning her ; and this angel addressed him, "Joseph, thou son of David," with an obvious allusion to the promise so fondly cherished by every believing Jew. Accordingly to this head belongs in part the subject of the next section, and how-

ever disposed the wild graft may be to boast itself against the natural branches, we may rest assured that there is no event in man's history so intensely watched and anxiously waited for by the holy angels as that of the literal Israel, no longer abiding in unbelief, being once more grafted into their own olive tree, to blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.

VII.

CHRIST SEEN OF ANGELS.

ONE part of "the mystery of godliness" consists in "God manifest in the flesh" being "seen of angels." 1 Tim. iii. 16. The Apostle Paul, who declares this, elsewhere speaks of himself and his brethren as being "made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Cor. iv. 9. But in order to acquire some little understanding of that amazing scene which opened upon the eyes of the holy angels, when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," we must revert again to the magnificent vision of Isaiah, who saw the Lord high and lifted up, and his train filling the temple; the winged seraphim standing before him, covering their faces with their wings, and crying one to another, as though too deeply struck to address the mighty One himself, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts." We must remember the prophet's exclamation of dismay and despair, for that he, a man of unclean lips, had seen the Lord; and the process by which one of the seraphim was commissioned to re-

move his fear of present destruction. Then turning to the twelfth chapter of St. John's gospel, we find it written concerning Jesus of Nazareth, "These words spake Isaiah WHEN HE SAW HIS GLORY, AND WROTE OF HIM."

He, therefore, who was thus seen of angels, manifest in the flesh, being formed in fashion as a man, making himself of no reputation, taking upon him the form of a servant, and humbling himself even to the death of the cross, HE was the King, the Lord of Hosts, to whom the seraphim could not lift their faces, and of whose glorious holiness they spoke one to another in tones of solemn awe. Great indeed must be the love of those celestial creatures to our fallen race, when they could even rejoice in triumphant songs, because, for our sakes, that terribly glorious King of Heaven had become a "babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." Oh, that we could, in any degree, realize what was then seen of angels, that our cold hearts might glow with a portion of gratitude and love to Him! The greatest wonder in redemption is the frozen indifference with which man contemplates his Redeemer's work. Even the best of men in his best moments must be a spectacle to angels through his lukewarm composure, and the feebleness of his efforts to make known to his fellow-sinners what the angels, who themselves gained nothing by it, rushed in troops to communicate, and celebrated with songs of enraptured praise.

They had seen the Lord's Christ, as a mortal infant, his birth-place a stable, and his companions the beasts

of the stall. Under the divine direction, they then proceeded to make known to some of the Lord's people the miracle of divine love. It is certainly the most exquisite picture in the whole Bible, if we can divest our minds of the absurdly childish idea which our prejudices have probably associated with the appearance of an angel, and portray to ourselves the majesty, no less than the beauty in which those splendid creatures are arrayed, when not walking the earth in the form and the garb of men.

There were "Shepherds" abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night : and lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid." This angelic herald, who came to proclaim his King and theirs, seems to have worn, as it were, his robe of state for the occasion. He "came upon them," probably standing between earth and heaven, as the mighty angel whom David saw, but not armed with a destroying sword ; and the brightness that shone in his countenance, a glory derived like that of Moses' face, from contemplating the presence of God, shed a broad light on the group of astonished shepherds, who beheld in a moment the darkness of night turned into the blaze of day ; and were terrified at the spectacle of so august a being. "And the angel said unto them, Fear not ; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you (Israelites) is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, Ye shall find the babe

wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” How grand is the sequel ! “ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men ! ” It would seem as though the very wonder, not to say consternation, occasioned by seeing the Lord of heaven and earth so abased as they described him to be, were lost in the joyful assurance, that since he, the Prince of Peace, was come down to dwell on earth, peace must ensue in all her borders ; and that such a token of good will to men was the sure earnest of defeat and destruction to the evil spirits who had so long borne rule over her population. The seed of the woman had appeared ; the serpent’s head would therefore now be effectually bruised ; and since we may well believe it utterly impossible that angelic natures should conceive the extent to which man’s hardened depravity could be driven by Satan, even to the crucifying of the Lord of glory, their benevolent joy knew no drawback ; and with a sudden burst revealing themselves, as they were permitted to do, to those favoured Jews, they filled the visible space with their glorious forms, and poured forth the divine harmony of their combined voices, until ascending in the view of the shepherds, they went away from them into heaven. Upon this scene the mind of infancy always seems to fasten with a peculiar feeling of its tender beauty ; and “ the child Jesus,” the “ babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger,” often becomes the hope of a heart too young to comprehend the nature of its faith—a

saving faith, we may not dare to doubt—in many cases where the wilful sin of childhood requires that such a hold should be taken of the atoning Saviour: and when the neglect of those whose general custom it is to defer the work of instructing a soul in the knowledge of God, until long after Satan has set his infernal imps to familiarize it with evil, would have the little one to perish, but for such merciful provision on the part of the Most High for those whom he purposes to remove by an early death, but not before they have sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression.

The next appearance of an angelic watcher over the incarnate Lord, was in a dream to Joseph, warning him. “Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word; for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.” Matt. ii. 13. “Until I bring thee word,”—how zealously affected were these heavenly creatures in the good work it was their privilege to labour in! This angel was apprized of the bloody purpose of the tyrant, and knew that he should be permitted to watch the progress of his impious conspiracy against the new-born King, and to convey to the believing guardian of that most sacred charge, tidings of safety, when all peril was past. He seems to have cautioned Joseph against any possible deception from other quarters; he was not to return from Egypt until the same messenger, who now bade him flee thither, should again appear to authorize his quitting it. We may readily assure ourselves that bright squadrons of

the highest angels of God, surrounded those poor fugitives, and kept at bay every foe that might have crept on their nocturnal path. Christ was at all times "seen of angels," and in one way or another they perpetually "ministered unto him." The assurance of safety, through Herod's death, was at length given by the angel in another dream ; and once more in the full sense of which the former deliverance had been but a prophetic type, out of Egypt God called his Son.

Of our Lord's early years no record is given, and we are not warranted in supplying the blank from any stores of imagination. Of this we are sure, that the Lord Jesus exhibited alike to angels and to men an all-perfect model of holiness, harmlessness, undefiled purity, perfect obedience, and that glorious righteousness by the imputation of which, all who believe on him are justified from all things : that he magnified the law and made it honourable, showing forth the sublime beauty of that in which man sees, alas ! little to desire, and much to shrink from as grievous and burdensome. Thus he continued, to his thirtieth year, when he went forth to John in the wilderness, to be baptized, and to receive that public testimony from heaven, the voice of the Almighty God, proclaiming, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ;" while the mysterious spirit descended and abode on him. John beheld this, and others, his disciples, chosen to bear testimony to this solemn anointing of our great High Priest ; but their eyes were not opened to behold the glory that surrounded them—the sapphire throne, the fiery cherubim, the innumerable company

of angels, and the many thousands of Israel, with the multitude of those who in all ages had looked forward, and by faith embraced the promise of the Seed of the woman, and having seen the day of Christ afar off, now witnessed his actual entrance on the arena of that terrible conflict which he came to wage. We can have but very poor conceptions of that awful hour, if we consider not the great cloud of witnesses, angels, and disembodied souls of men, who thronged to gaze upon the spectacle ; and who, beyond doubt, likewise surveyed the personal encounter that followed it.

Of this we have before spoken, and exhibited the successive wiles of the devil to allure his mighty antagonist into some concession on which he might lay hold. He left the man Christ Jesus on a pinnacle of the temple, whither he had been permitted to bear him for the last trial of his steadfastness ; and then it was that "angels came and ministered unto him." Up to that moment they were not permitted to interfere : Michael and his holy angels might form in bright array, and the dragon's fallen angels might eagerly look on, panting for their master's success, but none durst interpose. The strife was personal, and the triumphant issue certain ; for who among created beings, ever hardened himself against God, and prospered ? "Seen of angels" at all times, it was not often that they were privileged to succour their incarnate Lord as now we are told they did. The cake and the cruse of water provided by the angel for Elijah's refreshment, were cheerfully prepared and courteously bestowed ; but with what eager gladness of heart must

those ministering spirits have brought to their gracious King the sustenance that his body, exhausted by the prolonged fast, then required ! We may believe it to have been an epoch in the existence of the holy, happy creatures who were chosen to render this service and gently too ; to facilitate his return from the giddy height to which Satan had borne him ; and to listen to the gracious words that spoke acceptance of their devotion : for he who with such authority rebuked and commanded the unclean spirits whenever they crossed his path, had surely words of another tendency whereby to encourage the obedient, and to animate the zealous servant.

But from thenceforth unmitigated suffering was to be the lot of the Lord Jesus, in order that ours might be the lot of unmingled blessedness : foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. Disbelieved on by his brethren, who also mocked and aspersed him ; slighted if not opposed by other kindred after the flesh ; not openly acknowledged or countenanced by any but the poor of the people ; and subsisting on the little aid that such could afford to give ; it does not appear that the angels were allowed to yield relief to his bodily necessities, or to cheer his human spirit by any perceptible sympathy in his griefs. They, however, furnished him with a continual theme of discourse ; so constantly adverted to, indeed, that were no mention made of them in any other part of God's word, we could gather enough from our Lord's incidental allusions to inform us what are their natures, their employments, their

dispositions, and their present and future privileges. It is remarkable how often he dwells upon them as interested spectators of the affairs of this world; and witnesses of what shall hereafter come to pass. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the angels of God." Luke xii. 8. 9. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his father's, and of the holy angels." Luke ix. 26. "When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations." Matt. xxv. 31, 32. It would be impossible to reconcile such expressions as these with any ignorance on the part of the heavenly host as to what passes among men; on the contrary it clearly implies that they, having looked upon every transaction in the human family throughout its continuance, will be summoned as witnesses to the exact justness of the final award, when all are gathered together in one vast assemblage, to receive their everlasting doom.

But we must return to the story as regards angelic interpositions, recorded in the narrative of our Lord's personal sojourn on earth. After the close of his combat with the Evil One, we read no more of their appearance, until that most awful scene when, with his soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death, the Redeemer withdrew a little way from his drowsy disci-

ples, and poured out before his Father that prayer which betokened the extreme death of his humiliation, in submitting to endure the mortal anguish of human fear, the fear of approaching death. Far be it from us to follow the example of some who would fain pry into the impenetrable mystery of that hour's suffering! We are told that it was the hour of the powers of darkness; when the prince of this world came to find that he had nothing in the Son of God; when the supplication was wrung from the Redeemer's lip, that if it were possible the cup might pass from him; yet qualified by the submissive addition, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." Then it was that "there appeared an angel unto him, from heaven, strengthening him," Luke xxii. 40, and what a mission that angel had!

The mind sinks under this scene; not the bright throng of chariots and horses of fire that surrounded Elisha; not the array of seraphim, seen by Isaiah, giving glory to the Lord of hosts; not the great multitude of the heavenly host who appeared to celebrate his incarnation; not even the party of those who came to minister unto him when Satan had departed; but one single solitary angel appeared, coming direct from heaven, from the immediate presence of God the Father, advancing through the gloom and stillness of night, and for what purpose? to strengthen him from whom all strength is derived! We cannot tell of what nature was the strength conveyed: we have the word, and nothing more; and we know that, notwithstanding the strength thus imparted, "being in an ag-

ony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Luke xxii. 44. Of this spectacle the angel was a witness ; and a witness he will prove against such as reject the salvation wrought out for them at such a fearful price by the Son of God ! We cannot pretend to descant on this heart-piercing scene ; we have it, indeed, most clearly set forth for our trembling contemplation, and deeply ought we to ponder it. The Lord of hosts, the King of glory, prostrated on the earth that he created, offering up "prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears," Heb. v. 7, in an agony that wrung a bloody sweat from every pore, while one of the brightest of his creatures, sent from the invisible throne of God, stood by, imparting such strength as he was commissioned to bring, and beholding the sons of men, for whom all this was undergone—unmindful of the repeated admonition to watch and pray, and not even sufficiently alive in their Master's cause, at this extreme point of his distress, to watch with him one hour—slumbering at the distance of a stone's cast. Surely this was the lowest point of the Saviour's humiliation, when he could accept strength from a created angel : and surely it ought also to lay us in the lowest depth of self-accusing shame, that for our grievous sins and provocations he was so bruised, so put to grief ; while not one of the three especially selected out of the chosen twelve, no not even the beloved and loving John had a word of consolation, or a gesture, or a look of sympathy to tender ; nor a movement of the heart towards him who could have read its most secret throb.

All were sleeping, sleeping indeed for sorrow, but not with a sorrow like his, who was suffering for them. It seems to endear the holy angels, that one of their number should have been found, seeking to soften that unutterable bitterness of our Master's grief; and to strengthen him, when forsaken of all help, assailed by Satan, and with the keen prophetic anticipation of all the morrow's torments full on his spirit.

But though only one appeared to help him, many were the angelic spectators of that night's agony. We know that Christ was "seen of angels;" and we cannot believe that ever, for one moment of time, were their regards withdrawn from him. There is a remarkable passage in the Epistle to the Ephesians, iii. 9—11, where the Apostle speaks of "the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now under the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he proposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." By these principalities and powers in heavenly places, the angels must necessarily be meant: and the making known to them the manifold wisdom of God by the church, seems no less clearly to imply that the contemplation of the adorable mystery of man's redemption by the incarnation, sufferings, obedience, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, brought a vast accession of the knowledge of the glory of God, even to the highest of created intelligences. To the rebellious, "the wicked spirits in high places," was

thereby shown forth in dazzling display, the immensity of the mercy and goodness against which they had irretrievably sinned ; and of the wisdom that could devise, and the power that could accomplish the restoration of man from the ruin into which Satan had plunged him, in a way perfectly consistent with that solemn declaration, "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," and with every attribute of the Most High. To the holy angels, who have joy in the presence of God over every sinner that repenteth, how inexpressibly beautiful and glorious must be this work of their Divine Master. Theirs was a privilege to behold him throughout every stage of its arduous progress, and we cannot enter into the deep feeling, the full comprehension, with which they pour forth the everlasting song, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain !" It is marvelous how little some excellent people allow themselves to think about the angels, as connected with this theme : the blank left in their system by the omission of so very rich a part of God's revelation would, at least to us, be a very dreary one. We could not afford to forget that the Lord Jesus in all that he did and suffered for us was watched, marveled at, and exceedingly glorified by those with whom we look to be hereafter equal, but to whom we are now so immeasurably inferior, that a single individual among them could, with a movement of his powerful arm, depopulate this land ; or by the brightness of his appearance, if fully revealed to our sight, turn, as Daniel expressed it, "our comeliness into corruption."

It is impossible to conceive what must have been the emotions with which the angelic host looked on, while the dreadful work proceeded from the moment of our Lord's agony in the garden, to that of his being taken down from the cross. We can hardly read those words, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than ten legions of angels?" without fancying every flaming sword among the listening myriads starting from its sheath, and every countenance blazing with ardour, to receive the command. They had witnessed the detestable act of the mercenary traitor ; they had seen Satan enter into him, and lead him to the guilty chief priests, and animate him to grasp with avaricious delight the wretched bribe, a goodly price that they valued Him at, whose is the silver, and whose is the gold, and whose is the round world and all that it contains ! and now they beheld the wretched man conducting his midnight band to the garden, the scene of that terrible agony, and that beauteous submission to the Father's will ; they beheld him approach and salute his Divine victim ; they saw the inconstant Peter, now fully roused from sleep, fighting for him with whom he would not watch ; they saw the bands, the cords and fetters, the preparation for such horrors, as surely they could not expect to have beheld their heavenly King subjected to ; and they heard those words of conscious power and majesty, in which he named them—*them*, his own loyal, loving angels, as ready to appear to the rescue. Oh, what a blaze would have burst upon that night of black darkness, had not Omnipotence restrained

the glowing legions ! “ But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be ? ” added the meek Saviour, and the thought of deliverance was past. Gabriel could not forget his own message to Daniel ; the seventy weeks were accomplished, and Messiah must be cut off. Their intimate acquaintance with all that God has revealed, and the sure confidence they have, that whatever he hath spoken shall come to pass, even as he has said it, are to the angels instead of a foreknowledge that no creature may attain to : and if we give the like heed to what God has declared, and with the same simple faith and plain understanding receive it, we should find ourselves far better forewarned than now we are for the changes of this worldly scene, and armed with a more perfect submission to what betides us.

The sad events of that evening in Gethsemane were followed, as we all know, by others more terrible far ; and equally in the Jewish sanhedrim, in Pilate’s house, and Herod’s judgment hall, in the streets of Jerusalem, and on Calvary, was the Lord Jesus “ seen of angels.” They heard the false witness borne, the infamous sentence given ; they saw the scourging, the crowning with a diadem of thorns, the reed placed in that hand, which in its protecting shadow had so long hidden the house of Israel from their foes ! They heard the scoffing homage tendered by rude, idolatrous heathen soldiers to Him, whose regal glories filled all heaven with splendour : they saw the heavy cross laid on that shoulder where God has laid the government of all created things ; and they were constrained to witness

the payment of that world's ransom in the trickling drops that oozed from those pierced hands and feet. The rocks were rent, but those awe-struck angels could not if they would, have burst the bonds of obedience to the voice that bade them be still: the sun hid himself, but through the darkness of that unnatural night, the bleeding Lamb of God was still "seen of angels."

Where were the heavenly hosts, while for the appointed time the dead body of Jesus lay in the sepulchre? It was a Jewish sabbath, and it seems to have become a blank in time, because the light of the world was resting in the darkness of the grave. It was passed over—the ordinance transferred to the next glorious morning; and ever since the first day of the week has been the Sabbath of the Christian world.

But now we shall find the holy angels thronging a spot of earth, with all their glowing characteristics developed in a remarkable manner. The suspicious murderers entertained a fear lest their Victim might yet rise again; and they obtained from the Roman governor permission to seal the stone that covered the entrance of the sepulchre, and to set a watch of soldiers over it. The strict discipline of the Roman army made this a most efficient guard; but the debt was now fully cancelled. He who had died for our sins was to rise again for our justification: death had no more dominion over him. Nothing in the Bible is more splendid than the picture presented to the mind by the very brief recital of that glorious event. "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled

back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow ; and for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men." Matt. xxviii. 2, 3. There is something very real in this description—very much opposed to the incorporeality of the angelic host. The act of rolling away the massive stone which the good Joseph of Arimathea had placed as a security against the enemies of that sacred body, and which the high priests had farther made sure, and moreover sealed it, as a barrier against his friends, and his seating himself upon it, we can hardly believe to have been only in semblance. The angel, the highly-privileged angel, who was sent, or rather who was permitted to rush upon this enrapturing service, seems to have alighted upon earth with a force that made it quiver ; and to have rent or spurned from its place the stone that barred the egress of the Lord Jesus from his dark prison. No mortal eye beheld that egress ; the countenance of the angel caused the keepers to become as dead men : knowing as they did that any violation of the seal upon the stone would be visited on them with the extreme of punishment, they had no power to resist ; they fell prostrate, rendered senseless by terror ; and no marvel, seeing what was the aspect of the angel. Our foolish and improper habit of using the most hyperbolical comparisons on ordinary occasions, deprives Scripture of much of its due force. *As quick as lightning, as vivid as lightning*, are expressions in ordinary use among us ; and when we read that the angel's countenance was like lightning, we do not perhaps recall

one of those terrific flashes or blazes of electric fire, from which the boldest is constrained to avert his eyes ; and add to it the highest possible expression of intellectual power. We do not even try to render that small measure of justice which our very imperfect faculties would enable us to yield to the might and majesty of an angelic envoy from Him who maketh his ministers a flaming fire. And we may well believe, that the triumphant joy, the holy indignation of the angel, who came to open the Lord's sepulchre, would shine forth from his countenance with a most heavenly radiance. The miserable children of the dust had so far been allowed to work their wicked will, and Satan, utterly crushed as his head now was through the assumption of all power, both in heaven and in earth, by his almighty Conqueror, had still, with his inferior spirits, an hour during which they could boast that their conquest over vile man had laid the Lord of life in the grave. Very short, and fearfully embittered was that season of hellish exultation ; but it was enough to rouse the keenest emotions in the breast of a celestial spirit ; and we may be assured, that when the longed-for command was issued, and the waiting angel sped his way to the garden of Joseph, the poor, wretched soldiers of Rome engaged but little of his attention, fixed as it must have been on the baffling of the malice of Satan. Not against the miserable sinners of earth, the poor heathen slaves who occupied an assigned post at the sepulchre, did the lightning of his countenance flash forth ; but against those hostile legions who had wrought so much wo ; against him who, having had

the power of death, was now virtually destroyed by the dying of the Lord Jesus.

Although only one angel is named as having executed this commission, we know that many were present. No mortal was found worthy to witness that greatest event that creation ever viewed—the rising of the Son of God from the tomb; but “seen of angels” it unquestionably was; and they seem to have become visible under different circumstances, singly or not, to the individuals who came to the sepulchre. Thus we find that the angel who in the sight of the keepers sat upon the stone which he had just rolled away, was not found there by the women, but, finding the stone rolled away, “and entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were affrighted. And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way: tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.” Mark xvi. 5—7. Here we read of no lightning, nothing to terrify: the angel’s aspect is that of a young man, and his words full of gentleness and peace. He speaks as one intimately acquainted with all that so thrillingly interested them: he refers to what had been spoken to them by their Lord; and Peter, whose heart was still writhing under the conscious guilt of his denial, is particularly named, to assure him of his being still included among the beloved followers of the Lord.

Again, when Mary Magdalen was there alone indulging her grief, "as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, and seeth two angels in white, sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." John xx. 11—13. It seems as though the angel, knowing how often our Lord had spoken of his resurrection from the dead, marveled how any one who loved him could weep at the evident fulfilment of that glorious prediction.

During the forty days of our Lord's farther continuance on earth, we may be assured that he was still "seen of angels," who surrounded his path, adoring him, ministering unto him, and eagerly looking forward to the moment when they should escort him to his throne above, with the rejoicing song, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in!" Those forty days that intervened between the rising again and the ascension into heaven of the Lord Jesus, were a precious type of the coming time, when earth shall once more enjoy the presence of her heavenly King, and bask in the brightness of his divine glory, while angels tread her peaceful surface, and that which is now but a howling wilderness of sin, shall blossom like a rose, and become as the garden of Eden. May the Lord hasten that day, when his children, no longer buffeted by messengers of Satan, and pining for communion with Him, too often in vain through the abound-

ing of temptations, and the deep knowledge and subtlety of those with whom they must continually wrestle, shall serve him without fear, while dwelling in the presence of his millennial glory !

VIII.

THE APOSTLES A SPECTACLE TO ANGELS.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that whereas we do not read of any visible interposition of angels in the affairs of men, as ministering spirits, until after the call of Abraham, and the promise to him of Christ as his seed, or, to the very last, with the single exception of Cornelius the centurion, all to whom we are told they appeared in that capacity, were of Abraham's race. We are fully assured, that to every child of God they render the same offices of love and care as to the ancient people of the Lord ; but, together with the Jewish dispensation, under which we include the Church of the circumcision in Judea, up to the final scattering of the people, ended the personal intercourse of angels with the children of men in the flesh ; and those concerning whom we are now to speak, were Jews.

When our Lord was about to ascend into heaven, his disciples, true to their national feelings and scriptural expectations, asked him, " Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom unto Israel ?" But that period was yet far distant, and he answered them, " It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which my Father hath put in his own power." Acts i. 6, 7.

It was enough that the promise had been given, and that the restoration of the kingdom of Israel was sure ; but a militant, not a triumphant church, was that of which they were to be constituted pillars ; and they must sow in tears, in humiliations, persecutions, afflictions, and distresses, the great harvest to be reaped when the King should come, and all his saints with him, to that restored kingdom.

The Lord was parted from them ; a cloud received him up out of their sight ; but they were loath to believe he was indeed gone. Knowing him of a certainty as their Messiah, and also knowing that their Messiah would assuredly be a deliverer, a prince, a ruler, over the Jewish nation in particular, while his dominion should extend throughout the whole earth, they who had now seen the great work of man's redemption perfected, looked for the glorious sequel, of which they knew that a leading sign would be the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. They seem to have expected that he would no longer delay this great consummation, but fulfil now his own and his Father's repeated promise ; and the ascension of their Lord left them very desolate, disappointed, perhaps shaken in faith. " They looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up ;" and from the context we may infer, that their feeling was one of dread and dismay. Can he have forsaken us ? Is Israel not to be gathered ? will he not even now relent, and return and finish the mighty work ? or can it be that we have suffered so many things in vain, and are now left to mourn a hope that has mocked us ? must we take up the language of Jeremiah, and say

“O, the hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof, why shouldst thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a way-faring man, that turneth aside to tarry for the night? Why shouldst thou be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save? yet thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name; leave us not.” Jer. xiv. 8, 9. That their secret thoughts were of this complexion we have every reason to suppose from what follows: “And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” Acts i. 10, 11. To gaze after their Lord, to keep their eyes fixed on that spot whither He, their only help in time, their only hope in eternity, was gone, and to contemplate the pathway by which He, their forerunner, had even then entered beyond the veil, to appear in the presence of God for them, was surely natural and seemly: but their feeling was probably so far tinctured with dismay and doubt, as to call forth the gentle remonstrance of these two angels, who lingered behind their fellows to bear a message of consolation to the perplexed disciples, that should be for the encouragement of the Church until the Lord come.

After this we have many instances of the care and diligence with which the angels fulfilled their ministry to the Church in Jerusalem. When the apostles, by their preaching and miracles, had so roused the indig-

nation of the high priest and the Sadducees, that they laid hands on them, and put them in the common prison, "the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison-doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." Acts v. 19, 20. This deliverance was wrought in so quiet a manner, that no one was aware of it until the next day: the doors were shut, and the keepers standing before them when the officers came, who were sent to bring the prisoners before their cruel and unjust judges. Yet even this marked deliverance had no effect on the hardened opposers of God's word; all, save Gamaliel, were disposed to slay them, and when, by God's providence, that was overruled, they were beaten and threatened, and commanded to speak no more in the name of Jesus. In the beautiful narrative of Stephen, no mention is made of angelic ministry, although we cannot doubt that they surrounded on all sides the heavenward steps of the protomartyr; but in the persecution that followed his death, we find them actively employed in aiding the spread of the gospel. "The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza which is desert." Acts viii. 26. This embassy was for the conversion of the Ethiopian, who was evidently a proselyte to Judaism; but soon another Gentile was to be brought into the fold, a Pagan, and one holding a command that would, of necessity, often render him liable to act as an enemy against the Lord's people. He was, however, a sincere believer in God, as the creator and

preserver of men; and He who has said, "Unto him that hath it shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly," was now to be revealed to him, as the Redeemer, the merits of whose all-sufficient sacrifice rendered the prayers and alms of the devout Roman officer acceptable before God. Being in Cesarea, "he saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day, an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? and he said unto him, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the seaside: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." Acts x. 3—6. Thus, by angelic ministry, were the Gentiles first called into a participation with the children of Israel in the rich blessings and privileges of the Gospel.

It is indeed customary to date that event from the visit of the eastern wise men to Bethlehem; but concerning them, Scripture tells us nothing; and it is quite as probable, that they were descendants from some of the scattered tribes as that they were of Gentile origin. Respecting Cornelius, no doubt exists: the summons sent to Peter by the angel's direction, was the immediate cause of breaking down the middle wall of partition; God showed that unto the Gentiles too he had granted repentance unto life; salvation was of the Jews; but through their mercy all nations of the world, "all the families of the earth," were to obtain mercy. Hence-

forth it was seen, that in *Christ Jesus*, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision. The national promises remain firm, unbroken, unrecalled, and shall be, to their fullest extent, most gloriously fulfilled to the whole house of Jacob; the land of Canaan, the city of Jerusalem, shall be theirs, in full, exclusive, unalienable possession; but every spiritual advantage becomes alike the property of the believer, of whatsoever name, or blood, or nation he be. In *Christ Jesus*, there is neither male nor female: the woman's natural position is still that of subordination: she is commanded to obey, to honour the man, to call him lord, to reverence her husband, and to learn in silence with all subjection; but in *Christ Jesus* her privileges are precisely the same as his: equally a child of God, equally an heir of salvation, equal with the man and with the angels too, in the resurrection from the dead. So with Jew and Gentile; the former has a rank, a headship, a precedence, not to be done away with, as regards present things, only held back from him so long as he withholds his fealty from his promised Messiah; but this is an earthly distinction; and in *Christ Jesus*—that is, in the full participation of all the blessings promised to believers, as there is neither male nor female, so is there neither Jew nor Gentile. The woman does not, on embracing the Gospel, become a man, nor the Gentile a Jew. Much confusion exists, perplexing and misleading good people on this point. The Lord's returning mercy to Israel will speedily clear it up: but it is very desirable to see it correctly now.

- Cornelius, in relating to Peter the cause of his sending for him, says, "A man stood before me in bright clothing." Some supernatural radiancy surrounded the celestial messenger, that even in the light of mid-day so shone as to make the bold soldier afraid. It is a strange and sad proof of our conscious impurity, that it makes us shrink back from what is glorious and lovely, as though it could have no fellowship with us, but must regard us with displeasure. Such was not man's nature when God originally created him; such it will not be when, being saved by faith, he has attained to the resurrection, and put on the glorified body that claims an equality with the angels in heaven.

The next appearance of one of these ministering spirits is on an occasion of surpassing interest. James, the brother of John, had been slain with the sword, and Herod perceiving it pleased the Jews, then, alas! given over to a reprobate mind, proceeded to take Peter also. The experience which they already had of the Apostle's marvelous escapes from persecuting hands, seems to have rendered them very cautious, for no fewer than four quarternions of Roman warriors were considered a sufficient guard for this poor, fettered Galilean fisherman. But all the power of Rome, in that her proudest day, was of no avail against the mighty weapon wielded on the prisoner's behalf; for "prayer was made without ceasing of the Church unto God for him." "And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers

before the door kept the prison.” Acts xii. 5, 6. The two soldiers, it would seem, were asleep, as well as their captive; and the fetters that bound him were so secured to them that he could not possibly have moved from his place without rousing them. “And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals: and so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and second wards, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews.” Acts xii. 7—11. The power of the angelic deliverer, in this instance, is very strikingly set forth; and the tangibility of the whole event is directly opposed to a mere vision. The angel smote Peter on the side to rouse him from sleep; and though the unlocking of the fetters from his hands, and of the great gate of the prison, seems to have been an act of God’s sovereign will, without any instrumentality, it is impossible to regard the angel, in this

case, as a mere seeming, an incorporeal essence, not seen by the bodily, but the mental or spiritual eyes of the Apostle.

Not long after this, vengeance overtook the cruel tyrant, who had hoped to glut his own and the people's thirst for blood by slaying Peter. We read, "Upon a set day Herod arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God glory : and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost." Acts xii. 21—23. Probably the same angel who delivered Peter, might be commissioned to execute this punishment on the persecutor of the Church ; but by whatever hand the judgment came, it was a solemn warning to men ; and seeing how the angels rendered praise to the Most High, in the hearing of John, for the appropriateness of his retributive visitation, we may well believe that every spectacle of chastisement inflicted on sinners is a call for renewed thankfulness and praise on the part of the angels who have been kept faithful to their heavenly King, while others fell into guilt and terrible condemnation. "By the Church," they learn a vast deal that redounds to the glory of God, and to their own encouragement in the path of obedience. When Paul, oppressed by the multitude of trials, wrote those words to the arrogant Church of Corinth puffed up with their gifts—"I think that God hath set forth us the Apostles last, as it were appointed to death : for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels,

and to men : we are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ ; we are weak, but ye are strong ; ye are honourable, but we are despised : even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ; and labour, working with our own hands : being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we entreat ; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day," (1 Cor. iv. 9—13,)—when he wrote these words, he described the means by which God was at that time instructing not only the world and the Church, but the angels in heaven. The spectacle of such sufferings, combined with such constancy, patience, zeal, and love, was redounding to the glory of God, who out of the pitiable weakness of frail and fallen humanity, made strong his servants, and provided that his Son who had been "seen of angels," should be so effectually "preached to the Gentiles," that he was believed on in the world. His manifold wisdom was made known even to the principalities of heaven, by rendering the most foolish things of earth sufficient to baffle all the cunning, and to tread under foot all the powers of hell. Angelic ministry was indeed sometimes employed, as if to remind the suffering disciples, how much sympathy existed towards them in the unseen world, when often on earth no man stood by them ; but in general the Lord wrought towards them and in them of his own sovereign, direct power ; while the angelic host looked on and adorned his condescending mercy to the children of the dust.

We have one more instance on record of the actual appearance of an angel to the favoured Apostle of the Gentiles ; and that is on an occasion of peril so wild, and destitution so entire, that imagination can scarcely picture anything beyond it. Paul, having escaped the hands of the Jews at Jerusalem, and endured an imprisonment of more than two years at Cesarea, was at length shipped for Italy, that he might, as the Lord had shown him in a vision, bear witness of Him in Rome also. A tedious voyage, the latter part of which was undertaken against the prophetic warning of Paul, brought them at length into the most imminent danger : they were tossed helplessly on a tempestuous sea, in a great storm of such long continuance, that for fourteen days the mariners had not even found time or spirits to eat, and all were reduced to utter despair, the prisoner Paul stood forth, and after gently rebuking them for despising his former caution, went on, " And now I exhort you to be of good cheer ; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul ; thou must be brought before Cæsar : and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee, wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer : for I believe God that it shall be even as it was told me." Acts xxvii. 22—25.

With the narrative of this gracious deliverance, and Paul's subsequent abode at Rome, a chained and guarded captive, the inspired history of the early church concludes. Very shortly after this its first age, corruptions crept in, and men were so ready to forge

the seal of God's authority for their own vain imaginings, that in the absence of the original stamp, we have no warrant for giving credence to any recorded interposition from above. Such may have been vouchsafed; but if we cannot now invalidate, neither can we authenticate it, and we leave off where the Lord saw good to close the testimony of what is past; we have only to notice what is yet to come.

IX.

ANGELIC MINISTRATIONS IN THE LAST DAYS.

FOR many hundreds of years our earth has been unvisited by angels, so far as the testimony of man's bodily senses is concerned; but the same faith by which we know that the worlds were made, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen, assures us that with unremitting care and tenderness, the ministering spirits of heaven minister unto them that shall be heirs of salvation; and our daily experience bears testimony that on many an occasion where dangers the most menacing have beset our path, or difficulties the most bewildering have perplexed it, we have had reason to confess with gladness of heart that "the angel of the Lord encampeth about them that fear him, and delivereth them." In how many instances this occurs where we never are conscious of having escaped a perilous, or struck into a safe path in time of danger, through the watchfulness of our unseen friends, we shall perhaps learn when admitted into their happy fellowship forever.

But the time approaches when a great multitude of the heavenly host is again openly to visit earth, attendants on the triumphant state of Him whose lowly birth in a stable once brought to men's ears their hymns of thanksgiving to God. As the end of this dispensation draws nigh, we are taught to expect that the angels will take an exceedingly active part in what is going forward ; and, first, we may refer to our Lord's discourses on this subject. In explaining the parable of the tares and the wheat, he says, "The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire ; so shall it be in the end of this world : the Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." Matt. xiii. 39—42. On another occasion, when speaking not in parables, but in a strain of prophetic description, our Lord also showed the office reserved for the angels in reference to his own people. "And there shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven : and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory : and he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Matt. xxiv. 30, 31. This "great sound of a trumpet" is also mentioned by St. Paul, 1 Thess. iv. 16. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of

the archangel and the trump of God." The two-fold office of gathering together the elect, and of gathering out all that do iniquity, is likewise set forth very strongly in the Revelation: "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." Rev. vii. 2, 3. But a more remarkable parallel appears in another part, where the time referred to is evidently the same with that spoken of by our Lord, namely, the end of the present dispensation. We have there a harvest, first of the Lord's elect, then of his enemies. "And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." Rev. xiv. 14—16. This is clearly the gathering in of the wheat—the elect; the Lord's harvest of his redeemed people. What immediately follows corresponds with the destruction of the tares. "And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle: and another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire, and cried with a loud cry to him that had the

sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth ; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God." Verse 17—19.

Again, while three unclean spirits go forth from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty, we find it is an angel who loudly summons all the fowls of heaven to gather themselves together to eat the flesh of these rebellious kings, their captains, and their hosts." Rev. xvi. 13, 14 ; and xix. 17, 18.

From all this we may certainly infer that in every event connected with the final triumph of the church, and discomfiture of her foes, angelic agency will be employed to a very great extent. Even if it were admitted that we must view symbolically what is said of the angels in the mysterious book last quoted, (which we do not admit,) we cannot suppose that our Lord also spoke in a figure. So far from it, the "wheat" and the "tares" and the "reapers" were figurative, but the "children of the kingdom," the "children of the wicked one," and the "angels" were the actual beings referred to under those similitudes. We may quite as reasonably deprive the two former classes of their personal identity as the latter : just as properly take saints and sinners for imaginary beings as angels, as well doubt that the elect shall be finally admitted to glory, and the condemned sent into punishment, as

that angels shall be the real instruments employed in conveying both to their respective destinations. If we had nothing else to point to, those few words would settle the question. "The field is the world ; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one ; the enemy that sowed them is the devil ; the harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels."*

That the closing scene then, of the present dispensation will be accompanied by a visible display of the hosts in heaven in great numbers, we can hardly doubt ; those whom our Lord, then seated on the throne of his glory, shall confess or deny "before the holy angels," will certainly see those witnesses of their doom ; and during the tremendous events that usher in this judgment, while Satan and his legions are using every possible device to stimulate the rebellious bearing of hardened sinners, to confirm the doubtful in their unbelief,

* It is worthy of note, too, as connecting this period of universal activity on the part of the angels with other Scriptures, that no two words can be more different in their signification, than those which our translators have all rendered by the same term "world." In the first instance, "The field is the world ;" the Greek word expresses distinctly this terraqueous globe, the material, visible earth in which we live ; but in the latter clause where we find it translated "The harvest is the end of the world," in the original it is "the completion of the age," *xosmos*, the world, has no affinity whatever with *aion*, the age : and not only here, but in all parallel passages we find the same event, i. e., the great harvest of the Lord, the day of his coming, spoken of by the term *aion*, proving that a great crisis in the order of things, not the destruction of the earth, is pointed at.

and to deceive the elect, these powerful and beneficent spirits, acting under an immediate command from their gracious King, will indeed encamp around his people. We may comprehend in some measure the necessity of such a constant guard in our present comparatively safe and easy state, and take comfort in knowing that so it is with us, if we truly love the Lord; but how unspeakably precious will then be the thought of his having given his angels charge concerning us, to keep us in all our ways, when earthquakes and storms, signs and wonders, false Christs and false prophets abound, to terrify or mislead us! Many a defenceless child of God, finding himself, like Elisha in Dothan, accompanied by foes too numerous and too strong for him to contend against, will take comfort from knowing, and perhaps on some occasions, seeing that chariots and horses of fire, and flaming swords wielded by hands of angelic strength, are arrayed on his side. When Satan puts forth his utmost might in the rage of a last, despairing struggle, against the Lord his conqueror, and the little flock that are about to bruise the great enemy under their feet, we may be assured that the zeal of "God's host" will be roused, and their love inflamed in a proportionate degree, contemplating as they will do, the manifold wisdom of God in the dangers, deliverances and final glory of his church, while they execute the gracious purposes of his tender compassion towards the poor sheep of his pasture, appointed by wicked spirits and evil men, to be slain. It is, indeed, an overwhelming thought, what the aspect of this world will be, when, for a season, the restraint is

taken off that now holds the wills of fierce and crude men within bounds ; when the heathen, that is, all who are not Christ's, rage, and their kings and rulers conspire together to cast off the government of the Most High, and to root out his dominion from the earth, "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." For the elect's sake they will be shortened, and the harvest will be brought in more quickly than men expect ; but under what circumstances will the angels divide and gather out the good seed from among the tares of the field ? We know how Lot and his family were rescued from Sodom ; we know how Noah and his household were shut into the ark, ere the waters of the flood lifted it up from the earth ; and we know, though not from the page of inspiration, how the Christians were delivered from Jerusalem's dreadful destruction, by a temporary movement of the besieging army, who never dreamed of assisting them, but who thereby enabled them to flee to a place of safety. An ark, a Zoar, a pillar, there will always be to shelter that church, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail ; and the Lord will send such guidance that his poor trembling flock of way-farers, "though fools, shall not err therein."

But it is when the Lord shall personally come again, in like manner as his disciples saw him go up into heaven, that the innumerable company of angels will be revealed. Such is the declaration : "The Lord himself shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our

Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. Then shall the splendid imagery of the Psalms and prophetic writings be fulfilled, and much more than fulfilled; for what language, even of inspiration, can convey to our weak and darkened minds any realizing idea of those things of which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived, the terrible magnificence? One angel, described only as "a man in bright clothing," made the bold and pious Roman centurion afraid; another by the exhibition of his angelic knowledge and love so overpowered the mind of the holy John, that he would have offered him worship, due to God alone. What then must be the full display of all that is dazzling in the Lord's triumphant hosts, when thousands of thousands shall stand before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand minister unto him? Their lively interest in all that concerns us, a race of creatures infinitely every way inferior to them, save only through the high exultation of our nature by its union with Deity in the person of Christ, and the heavenly privileges thereby secured to his believing people, is matter of wonder; and whether they swell the chorus of praise over the ruins of the great harlot city, Rome, or spread the joyous tidings that Jerusalem is rebuilt, and again inhabited by her long lost children; or hover round the heavenly city itself, the abode of those who have attained to the resurrection from the dead, with that song of angelic sympathy, "Let us be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the Lamb is come," we shall be obliged to confess that they, respecting whom we have been accustomed to think so little; who have been watching

the progress of all that regards us with unwearied diligence, and unfailing care, and whose loudest song of praise to their eternal King hails him the Lamb that was slain,—slain for *our* redemption,—have such a claim on our love and gratitude, as can never be properly estimated, until, seeing our Lord as He is, we also see them as they are, and remember how incessantly, how willingly, they ministered to us, through the long years of our unsteady, perverse, inconsistent course; contending with our foes, keeping guard over our steps, and finally thronging to welcome us to a full participation in all the glories of their own heavenly home.

This refers to the final period of the present dispensation, when we expect that He who is gone to receive for himself a kingdom will return to establish it on earth. There has, however, been a spiritual coming of the Lord Jesus to his people from the beginning, while the call to enter into the eternal world has successively reached them. When a believer departs to be with Christ, he becomes a resident in the celestial Jerusalem, entering into the peaceful rest of heaven, where Christ also sitteth at the right hand of the Majesty on high, there to abide, until with all the other saints, he is summoned to attend his Lord, and to be re-united to the body which he once left below. In this transition of the departing soul, it is certain that angels are always present not merely as spectators, but as most active messengers of Christ. It is difficult to speak of the state in which a disembodied spirit finds itself, on launching into eternity: it is one of those

things which every one is certain to know by experience, but which none can foreknow by any effort either of wisdom or knowledge, or the most vivid imagination. The separate existence of souls, of every soul of every human being, from Adam to the last of his posterity who shall taste death, is not even questionable by any who believe in the revelation of God; and that all who have already lived and died, are now in companionship either with angels or devils, awaiting the resurrection of the body, either to life or damnation, is also very plainly set forth in Scripture. To Abraham's bosom, to the rest and happiness enjoyed by faithful Abraham, the angels bore Lazarus; while the rich man, we are distinctly told, went to hell; and what is most remarkable, the angel who showed John the wonderful things related in the Apocalypse, so identified himself with the prophets, and other obedient servants of Christ, as almost to do away the distinction between an angel and a glorified saint. Nor is this a solitary instance: our Lord, speaking of the claim that little children have on the tenderness and care of Christians, says, "I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven." Matt. xviii. 10. And when the damsel who went to hearken at the gate affirmed that she had seen Peter there, the other disciples, assured that he was either imprisoned in fetters or slaughtered, explained it, saying, "It is his angel." Many ingenious theories have been started on this ground; but when all has been said that man can say, we are authorized only to re-

ceive what bears upon it the infallible and indelible stamp of truth, " Thus saith the Lord."

That in heaven the spirits of justified men abide with angels, is quite indubitable on Scripture ground ; but we are also warranted to believe that they enjoy, occasionally at least, the angelic privilege of visiting earth, or of beholding clearly what goes on in the militant church. Otherwise, how could the souls under the altar know that their blood was not yet avenged on them that dwell on the earth ? And why, if forever divorced from all the ties of mortality, should they express impatience for the arrival of that time ? Assuredly not from any vengeful feeling : such is forbidden in just men in the flesh, and cannot reside in the spirits of just men made perfect. Besides, the generation on whom their blood was to be avenged, was probably not the same as the generation who shed it. We can only understand it as expressing a fervent desire for the speedy arrival of that day of vengeance which we know synchronizes with the year of the redeemed. Those souls beheld and mourned over the desolate state of the Lord's still persecuted Church ; the devoted little flock to which they also belonged ; and knowing that He would at once put all enemies under his feet, and exalt his Church to glory and everlasting peace, they pleaded for the hastening of that promised day.

Another instance, of which it cannot be said that it was figurative, as may be objected to the foregoing, is the appearance of Moses and Elias on the mount with

our Lord, in glorified bodies. Elias, indeed, did not die ; he took his own body with him ; but Moses died and was buried, though of his sepulchre no man knoweth to this day. Whether the body in which he then appeared was his own, raised again from death and the grave for a special purpose, or whether it was what the disciples meant when they talked of Peter's "angel," we cannot possibly tell. This we know, the person was Moses, who had been dead for many generations, and he talked with our Lord, as also did Elias, concerning his decease, which he should accomplish in Jerusalem. They spoke of a coming event ; of the locality assigned to it in the purposes of God ; and, eminent as were these two lights of the Old Testament church, we have no pretence for supposing that what was clearly revealed to, and perfectly understood by them, in the state of blessedness to which they had attained, was concealed from Abraham, Isaac, Jacob ; from Noah, Daniel, and Job ; or from any who had, by the like precious faith, entered the presence of God ; with whom is no respect of persons, and who often maketh the first last, and the last first.

This may seem somewhat irrelevant to the precise matter before us ; but the connexion is very intimate. To every individual among the great multitude before the throne, have the angels of God been ministering spirits ; and seeing that the privilege of believers in the life to come is to be made like unto the angels, to be equal with the angels, and that "those also who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him," when "the Son of Man shall come in the glory of his Father, and

of the holy angels," we are sure the departed saints shall with the angels bear a very conspicuous part in the proceedings of that day ; but we have a striking indication that they will not descend to earth as strangers long divorced from all its concerns, but as those who have like the ministering angels, with keen interest watched the progress of the church below toward the final consummation of all its hopes.

The apostle Paul, after enumerating many of those who by faith obtained the heavenly inheritance, includes in the same company all who had borne testimony during their lives to the truth, and staid themselves on the promises of God. He then shows that they had not yet obtained the promises to which all looked forward, but were kept waiting for us ; that is, for the whole multitude of them which shall be saved. He speaks of them in their present state as a great cloud of witnesses encompassing us ; and points to the circumstance as calculated to quicken us in " the race set before us," the same race wherein they also strove, and succeeded. As too often happens, the force of this beautiful passage is greatly weakened by the injudicious division into chapters of what was written continuously : but a little attention bestowed on these two chapters without any regard paid to such arbitrary disjointing, will present in a very glorious light the perfect union and uninterrupted communion of the whole body of the elect, from the time of Abel to the last period—the removing of those things that may be shaken, and the final establishment of the kingdom that cannot be moved. It is very remarkable, that he does

not say to believers still in the flesh, Ye shall come, but, "Ye ARE come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Heb. xii. 22—24. By faith the child of God enters into this community, embracing all that is of God, both in heaven and on earth; and when he puts off his tabernacle of flesh, it is not to lose sight of what he has hitherto beheld, and to open his eyes on a different scene, but to take in all that before he saw not, in addition to that which he has already seen. Having passed the waves of this troublesome world, and obtained a sure footing on the heavenly shore, he does not in selfish contentment turn his back upon his former companions, still struggling through the surge, but with deep interest contemplate their painful progress, and if so the Lord permit, joyfully unite with the ministering spirits who are commissioned to render such help as divine wisdom sees good, by their instrumentality to impart. This, carried a little way beyond what revelation sanctions, leads to perilous idolatry; and so we find it was, even in the apostles' days; but what then? If some of the unlearned and unstable wrest certain Scriptures to their own destruction, are we, therefore, to shrink from receiving the whole word of God? There is no doctrine so wholesome, so pure, so essen-

tially necessary to be believed, that by overstepping its prescribed bounds it may not be wrested to a fearful error, and some who will not entertain this exceedingly important and unspeakably encouraging subject of angelic ministry, and the communion of saints, lest it lead them into unsafe paths, will dogmatize on the origin of evil, free-will, and the secret counsels of the Most High, until they totter on the extreme verge of most presumptuous sin. John's mistake is recorded for our warning, and the angel's gentle rebuke for our instruction; and with these before him, what has the humble worshiper of God to fear from an attentive, thankful investigation of this lovely portion of the divine economy of grace?

X.

ANGELIC TRIUMPH.

WE have now to survey what is made known on the subject of angelic triumph, when the final overthrow of all that impeded the universal extension of Christ's kingdom on earth, shall have terminated this dispensation: and here indeed we trace the beautiful union once before displayed in their heavenly chorus, of "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men!" The twenty-fourth Psalm contains a sublime foretaste of what we look for, while describing that glorious scene, the ascension of the Lord Jesus on high, leading captivity captive. There, the heralding angels cry, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye, everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in." Those from within the gates inquire, "Who is this King of glory?" Not that they needed to be told; no, they knew the Babe of Bethlehem, who from his lowly birth had been "seen of angels," of all the angels of God, and well were they prepared to celebrate his return to the glory which he had with the Father before the world was: but they

loved to draw forth the answering shout, ascriptive of praise to their God, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle."

And again the summons is sounded from those majestic and resplendent legions, advancing as they sing, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates, even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in." The shining multitude, the seraphim, the cherubim, who throng around those eternal gates, and perchance the spirits of the faithful resting there, once more demand, "Who is this King of glory?" and once more the thundering song peals out, "The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of glory." It is wonderful how habit familiarizes the human mind to what is calculated to overpower it. The grandeur of this passage, the imagery that it teems with is such, that man's lip might well falter in appropriating the lofty strain, and his knee bow in unpremeditated adoration of the ascended King of glory; but we hear it until we can scarcely bestow a thought on its surpassing splendour; and yet in the pride of our cold, unthankful hearts, affect to look down upon the glowing creatures who cease not day or night audibly to pour forth the ardent devotion of theirs before the throne, as though their rank were somewhat below ours. But the proudest heart will be humbled, and the coldest kindled into flame, when that awful hour arrives for the seventh angel to sound, and great voices in heaven proclaim, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever:" when the Church in glory, that so

long awaited the day of vengeance, the year of the redeemed, takes up the strain, and says in prostrate adoration, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." When a voice shall come out of the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great," and the call shall be responded to by the myriads of the holy angels, the innumerable multitude of ransomed souls, the whole company of that rejoicing heaven and renovated earth, bursting forth, "the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Allelujah : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

That hour will come : and in the body, or out of the body, every soul of man shall witness its coming. How near it may be, we know not, but far distant it cannot be. A veil, the veil of our own darkened understandings, as yet conceals from us the glory that shall be revealed : and neither angel nor devil shall longer be invisible to our awe-struck gaze. The latter will pass into their fiery prison, and Satan will be cast fettered into his dungeon, and while heaven pours forth its dazzling legions, earth will be purified from all things that offend.

When John saw the multitude arrayed in white robes, with palms in their hands, standing before the throne, and heard them loudly ascribe salvation to God and to the Lamb, he saw all the angels fall upon their faces, and worship God, as *their* God. Wherever

a note of praise is uttered by the Church, it awakes an echo throughout the untold legions of heaven. This sympathy will never cease ; and with what delight God's angels contemplate the approaching triumph of their glorious King, we are told in many ways. That magnificent strain of holy exultation, descriptive of the final ruin of the great harlot city of Rome, is repeated as being uttered by a voice from heaven ; probably of an angel also, for it is called another voice from heaven, immediately following that of an angel having great power, and lightening the earth with his glory, who cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen." It was an angel also, one of the seven who had poured forth the seven last plagues on the earth, who showed to John the heavenly city, guarded at its twelve gates, by the same number of angels.

Here we may pause, to consider for a moment what is meant by this mysterious city ! It is often named in Scripture, as a place actually existing, but not on earth. Paul speaks of it to the Galatians, in direct contradistinction from the earthly Zion : "Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children ;" and "Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all." Gal. iv. 25, 26. It is difficult to conceive how, while one is indisputably a real, an existing, a material city, the other should be a visionary thing, a mere name ; or, that while Hagar is represented as the figure of a reality, Mount Sinai in Arabia, and that again of another reality, Jerusalem in Palestine, Sarah should only be the figure of a figure

which has no substantial antitype. Again, in Heb. xii., he names it the city of the living God ; the heavenly Jerusalem : and John, in Rev. xxi. says the angel "carried me away in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God." Our Lord also distinctly mentions it : "I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God." Rev. iii. 12. Though not so plainly named, this Jerusalem is clearly intended also by Paul, when he says, Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. xi. 10. And again, "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city." Heb. xi. 16. In the beautiful discourse addressed by the Lord Jesus to his disciples, immediately before his betrayal, he says, "In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you ; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." John xiv. 2, 3. Paul too says, "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens : for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven." 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. Is not this the "holy Jerusalem" which John saw ? The name imports "peace ;" or rather, it imports "where peace is

seen:" and there is no question, among spiritual people, as to the fact of this new Jerusalem being the heavenly home of God's people; but one very great discrepancy seems to exist between God's revelation and man's expectation: the latter expects to bid an eternal farewell to earth, and to go to a place called heaven, somewhere in a vastly remote space, where all that he shall find will be totally dissimilar from aught that he has ever seen or heard of; where he will be an etherealized, unsubstantial creature among beings and things equally removed from all with which we are now conversant. Revelation, on the contrary, tells us of "a city," of "mansions," of foundations, walls, and gates, indescribably rich, bright, and glorious indeed, but still answerable in some measure to what we are accustomed to; and it invariably speaks of this heavenly abode as coming down, at the appointed time, to the region of our earth. Paul speaks of being "clothed upon with an house which is *from*," not in "heaven:" our Lord says, "I will *come*, and receive you unto myself;" and the more minutely we inspect the Scriptures that bear upon the subject, the more we shall be struck by their harmonious bearing on the point.

It is a point in which every individual is personally concerned; and we may, without committing any presumptuous sin, examine, each for himself, what God hath seen fit to reveal to all. We must remember that our Lord Jesus Christ took to himself a body which saw no corruption; that, in the same body with which he arose from the dead, and the identity of which he

d to Thomas, he ascended into heaven, and shall again to judgment. Two of his people, Enoch and Elijah, also went to that unseen place in their mortal bodies; and at the crucifixion of our Lord "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of their graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." Matt. xxvii. 51—53. Now it is perfectly natural and allowable to ask, where are all these bodies? Changed, no doubt; their corruption having put on incorruption, and their mortal immortality, and made glorious, as was seen in Moses and Elias on the Mount; but still the same bodies that they wore when on earth. And if in the Bible we find a satisfactory answer to that question, by being told of a glorious place, a city, a habitation, prepared and reserved for God's children, and in due time to be revealed, not only to them, but to all others, though no others shall ever find entrance into it, surely we may be allowed to take, in a more literal sense, the declarations so often repeated than that which good men have been in the habit of connecting with them.

In all humility, then, we proclaim our belief, founded on many passages in the Bible, that a place, a real locality exists, far beyond the present scope of our vision, but not necessarily invisible to mortal eye; that to this place the glowing description given by John in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation belongs: that it is the present abode of the Lord Jesus Christ, in his human body, and of those named in a passage more

than once already quoted, an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and Church of the first-born, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the bodies of such as have heretofore, for some special purpose, been raised from the dead.

We believe that into this abode flesh and blood, in its unchanged state, shall not enter, but that it will, during the millennial period of the Church's peace and Satan's imprisonment, be fully visible to men upon the earth, among whom its happy inhabitants will have full freedom to intermingle, by the same facilities that placed Moses and Elias on the Mount, and brought the holy angels so often into companionship with man. We do believe that in this heavenly Jerusalem no distinction whatever subsists between Jew and Gentile, male and female, bond and free ; all being one in Christ Jesus, and like, and equal unto, the angels ; while in the earthly Jerusalem we certainly believe that the children of Abraham, according to the flesh, shall dwell under the acknowledged rule of their Messiah, possessed of every privilege that can belong to the citizens of the world's metropolis ; and invested with such honours and advantages as never yet were by any nation enjoyed. We believe that by a peculiar dispensation, frequently alluded to by our Lord and by the inspired writers, a subordinate rule, under Christ, will be exercised by the saints of the Church triumphant over the church still on earth ; while an intercourse no less frequent than are now the visits of those unseen ministering spirits, who have the charge over us to keep us in all our ways, will subsist between

those who are, and those who are not yet perfected in heavenly felicity. This view necessarily brings the holy angels forward as partaking richly in the triumphant glories of Christ's reign : they will have gathered out the tares, gathered in the wheat, and have seen their rebellious fellows who kept not their first estate, consigned to the abyss from whence they will no more escape ; or if permitted to share the short season of Satan's enlargement, and to aid in deceiving those whom he will finally assail, they will speedily be cast into the fiery pit forever. We are told that at the final judgment of all men, which follows this last outburst of Satanic malignity, the earth and its heaven shall flee away, and no more peace be found for them ; but the holy Jerusalem is imperishable : it is a building of God, eternal in those heavens with which our globe has no necessary connexion. There, without a pause, the songs of the redeemed shall ascend ; there, without a night, the day of peace and joy shall endure ; there at the gates, the "everlasting doors," angelic guards shall hold their safe and pleasant post, evermore employed in the service of their glorious King. Blindly erring as now we do, in vain attempts fully to comprehend what it will require, new and enlarged faculties to take in, even when the things now unseen are displayed to our sight, we shall then see clearly, and know even as we are known.

There is a practical application of this high and holy subject, the realities of the spiritual world, both angelic and Satanic, that must not be overlooked. No action of our lives, nothing that we can do or say, is uncon-

nected with the two classes into which those spiritual beings are divided. It fearfully aggravates sin to commit it, as we do, in the presence of those whom the Lord has commissioned to watch over and to minister unto us, and who cannot but be very jealous for their divine Master's honour; and in the presence too of those apostates who delight in our transgressions, because they dishonour God. How circumspectly should we walk, in many a case where now our ways are most inconsistent and perverse, if we could see the pure, bright, searching eye of a holy angel intently fixed on us, with a desire to mark how the Christian glorifies his Master; or if we caught the exulting leer of a devil, tracing out our crooked ways, or turned in mockery and scorn to the record of God's will, which we profess to follow, but from which we so perpetually swerve! Both might address us in the same language, and ask, the one in sorrowful reproach, the other in grinning exultation, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" that friend who has done all for us, even to the sacrifice of himself, for our redemption; and who has given such large supplies of grace, and such unlimited promises of help, that we may walk worthy our high calling, and enable him to present his church to God, holy and without blemish, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. To spot it, to wrinkle it, to pollute it, is the unceasing aim of Satan and his crew, while no created being can lend the smallest aid to stay the workings of sin, to palliate it when committed, or to supply a particle of help towards canceling this debt. There is no moment of our lives when

we are perfectly secure from the approach of evil spirits ; and though the Lord himself is ever present with his people, and his presence is all-sufficient to protect and to sustain them, yet we have clear intimations, as has been shown in these pages, that against those who would harm us an adverse armament is arrayed, watchful, zealous, and filled with holy love and tender compassion for the feeble children of men. It is sweet to be able to say, by faith, what Paul said from actual right, on occasions of imminent danger and deliverance : " There stood by me the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve." It does not derogate from the omnipotence or the omniscience of the Most High, while it exceedingly enhances his gracious care for both parties, that he should depute his bright angels to render loving service to his people. On their part, we may be assured, it forms a very endearing tie ; and it is strange that we, who are the great gainers, should be so utterly indifferent to the revealed fact, as to pass weeks, months, and some perhaps years, without bestowing a thankful thought on the matter.

Our notions of an earthly monarch's greatness are enlarged by observing that his sway extends over a multitude of subjects ; and that he has under his command an exceedingly numerous, formidable, obedient, and beautifully disciplined army, so ordered as to hold effectually at bay a no less numerous hostile force, perpetually menacing his dominions. Nebuchadnezzar, himself a great king and conqueror, understood this ; and how striking is the reference he makes to that peculiar feature in the majesty of the divine gov-

ernment ! “ He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou ? ” Our views on this subject are rarely so enlarged as those of the Chaldean king. To judge by the tenour of religious books, and ministerial discourses in general, very little praise is rendered to God for revealing to us this branch of the glory of his kingdom. We use in our public worship that exceedingly beautiful and most scriptural hymn, the *Te Deum* ; and fluently recite, “ To thee all angels cry aloud, the heavens and all the powers therein ; to thee, cherubim and seraphim continually do cry, Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth ! ” What a scene would open to our mental and spiritual view every time we utter these words, if we had habitually paid due attention to what the Lord God of Sabaoth,—of hosts, or armies,—has vouchsafed to show us in his word ! If all the imagery which we are so slow to remark was deduced from the Psalms of David, we should scarcely recognise them, so altered, so impoverished would they become ; and instead of thrusting this precious doctrine into the shade, we should do well to bring it very prominently forward, even at the expense of some topics which usually occupy a large share of attention, and which do but gender needless strife. We all, occasionally, are compelled to cry, Our soul cleaveth to the dust, and to ask for quickening grace, according to God’s word ; but we make too little use of some of the means which that word supplies for contemplations of a most elevating character. If God’s angels took no

more thought for us than we do for them, we should go stumbling about the world in a very uncomfortable manner.

With some it is a favourite plan to place the angels in a position vastly subordinate, or at best inferior to that of the saints. Yet when our Lord took upon him our nature, even the sinless nature, wholly exempt from Adam's rebellious taint, he is said to have been made a little lower than the angels. Paul, reproving the Corinthians for going to law before the unjust, and not before the saints, reminds them that by the saints the world shall be judged; and adds, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" 1 Cor. vi. 3. This seems evidently to refer to the judgment of condemnation, the "judgment of the great day," mentioned by Jude, unto which the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, are reserved. It does not warrant the assumption that God will make over to his saints the government of his angels. Another ground for this supposed exaltation over the heavenly host is alleged by some to be the closer proximity of the saints to the throne, as seen by John, where the angels are described as forming the outermost circle, (Rev. v. 11,) but surely this does not argue anything. The officials who guard the king's palace are often of much higher rank than those admitted to the presence-chamber. Our Lord has distinctly said of his glorified saints, "They are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Luke xx. 36. With the prospect of such glorious equality, well may the

sinful worms of earth rest thankfully contented. The angels are ministering spirits ; and their Master and ours came also " to minister." It is well to note these things : men are apt to adopt, without sufficient consideration, the notions of those who have perhaps borrowed from preceding writers, and amongst them framed systems in which the plain word of Scripture is less prominent than are their own glosses upon it.

But whatever discoveries are reserved for the period when we shall know even as we are known, the present is a time to make use of what God has distinctly declared to us. We are in the world ; in that field where the devil is now plentifully sowing, and carefully fostering his tares, for the twofold purpose of diminishing the Lord's harvest, and heaping up fuel for the unquenchable flames, in which the only solace of his own torments will be the sight of myriads suffering with him. His great seed-time is while men sleep : they will awake but to find the strong hands of God's angels binding the weeds for their final doom. This is a solemn thought for those who are appointed to watch the field ; for kings, and persons in authority ; for bishops, and ministers of religion ; for parents, and the heads of every household ; for all, in fact, to whom is committed the oversight of any fellow-creature. When they slumber at their posts, the enemy steals along, and injures their master's property, for which they must give account to him.

Another point where Satan must be met and resisted is chiefly personal ; each individual must look to himself. The seed of the word being sown by the

great Husbandman, the devil is sure to come and endeavour to take it away, ere it can sink and be rooted in their hearts. He knows how needful is prayer, with meditation, to render effectual that precious seed ; and by a multitude of devices, he will seek to divert the mind from such indispensable exercise. In this quarter the angels cannot oppose him ; they are not authorized to interfere, nor permitted to bear a part in the mighty work of man's regeneration, conversion, sanctification : there God alone operates. Jesus is the author and the finisher, and only on him can the soul lean for help against the mighty. The wisest and most faithful of God's servants cannot always discern a blade of wheat from a tare : they are told both must grow together until the harvest ; lest in attempting to root out the weeds they pull up the good plants also ; the reapers, with whom is discernment for the task, will come forth at the appointed time, and effect the separation, but though they can gather in the whole harvest without letting fall a single ripe grain, still they have nothing to do with the seed-time, or with the secret growth of the plant. They cannot hinder the choking of the word by worldly cares and pleasures ; they cannot cause that to take root which falls where no depth of spiritual susceptibility exists ; they cannot wrest from Satan's grasp what he has snatched away from the heedless hearer ; nor can they impart fertility to the heart of man, that it should so receive and retain as to bring forth fruit. So wonderfully has our gracious Lord guarded this and every other doctrine from abuse, that no humble,

believing hearer need fear for a moment to be led into error by conceding to the subject of these imperfect pages that prominence to which it is entitled, as occupying a very important place in the revelations of God.

We sometimes have the counsel gravely given to leave these things to learned men as being too high for simple minds. The seventy disciples whom our Lord sent forth, we are told, returned to him with joy, because even the very devils were subject unto them through his name. They were simple, unlearned people, who, fully believing all that he had said, instead of setting down to hold a learned disquisition on the nature of evil spirits, went and acted upon what he told them, commanding the devils in his name. He answers their glad communication by telling them that he beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven; he invested them with unlimited control over "all the power of the enemy," and, after cautioning them not to rejoice so much in this supernatural gift as in the knowledge that their own names were written in heaven, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21. With this encouragement before us, with a perfect consciousness of being a mere babe in worldly wisdom and worldly prudence, and simply believing that every word spoken of God is true, we have fulfilled our task; may it be as profitable to the soul of the reader,

as the writer feels it has been to her own, while with the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, to guide her, she has endeavoured to trace the outlines of what can never be perfectly filled up, until the veil of mortality is withdrawn, which now withholds our eyes from contemplating in all its wondrous details, the mysterious world of spirits.

CONCLUSION.

“WATCH.”

“DELIVER us from the evil one,” is the prayer which our Lord has instructed us to put up; and it is much to be regretted, that we are accustomed to use a different form of expression, calculated to withdraw our attention from the great personal adversary, and to present to our minds a vague notion of evil in general. Whatever isolates man, separating between him and the rest of God’s creation, is inimical to his best interests. He looks on the inferior animals, and forgetting in how many respects their natural sensibilities resemble his own, he becomes their cruel oppressor. He dooms them to protracted hunger and thirst; he overworks them, until every sinew of their exhausted frames is wrung by the anguish of intolerable fatigue; he breaks the endearing ties by which the Lord of all has seen good to sweeten their humble existence; and standing on a haughty eminence of superior intellect and conscious immortality, he degrades some of the most marvelous of God’s works, using them as mere tools for the supply of his artificial wants, the gratification of his avaricious propensities; until the whole

creation, groaning and travailing in pain together, sends up a fearful cry into the ears of Him who from the glorious high throne of his eternal Majesty stoops to feed the young ravens that call upon him. Man was placed in dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, that he might exercise a becoming vicegerency, brethren as they all are of the dust out of which his own body is so curiously formed; but Satan fills his mind with pride and hardens his heart against the pleadings of natural feeling on behalf of those who have no voice to utter in their own cause; and so, man, standing superciliously aloof from the creatures that his sin has subjected to vanity, works the work of devils in conniving at, if not wantonly inflicting, needless torments upon them.

Again, as below, so above his own scale of being there are races with which he is nearly affianced: not corporeally as here, but spiritually. These he cannot see, therefore he resolves to banish their existence from his thoughts. He is aware that of such superior creatures one class is ever about him for good, the other for evil; but what little he may have incidentally gathered on that subject he heeds not: and as to inquiry, he considers it a worthier employment to explode the depths of the earth for the fossil remains of some extinct species of animals, which had he met with it alive he would probably have hunted to death for his barbarous sport, than to seek a clearer knowledge of those beings among whom he must, assuredly and inevitably, dwell to eternity. Such insolation, we repeat, is most injurious to man: God never intended it for him. The

record of creation, the repeated injunctions to mercy, and the beautiful provision made for its exercise under the glorious code of Israel's law, all declare on the one hand, as do on the other the many revelations given of angelic ministry and of Satanic malice, that man is not authorized to lose sight of his actual position as a link in the chain of created being.

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,” said our blessed Lord. Against what were they to watch? He had apprized them long before, when he had taught them to pray, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one,” and had also put into their mouths a plea for being thus guarded, thus delivered: “FOR thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever.” The evil one seeks to usurp God's kingdom within us, to stir us up in resistance to His power, and by our rebellion, our ungrateful, unblushing scorn of His pure law, to tarnish the glory that rests upon His Church. We pray that Satan may not succeed in so seducing us into the robbery of God; we pray to be delivered from his wiles; and our prayer is accepted, if it be offered up in sincerity, the heart accompanying the lips, and with a willingness on our part to watch against the approach of that from which we have prayed to be preserved.

When the Christian, in pursuit of his lawful calling, finds himself entering those ways where the ungodly take council, and sinners walk, and scorners fix their seat, he knows that he must watch, and feels that he must pray. Temptation will surely then assail him; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride

of life, will each find its suitable incitement prepared: the fear of man will bring one snare, the love of man another; and he has no difficulty in realizing the presiding presence of Satan and his angels in the haunts of mammon or among the splendours of earthly pomp, or where contending parties strive for mastery in the field of worldly distinction. He does not love such scenes, but duty calls him into them, and he goes softly, humbled in spirit, wary in mind, taking heed lest, amid the abundance of stumbling-blocks, he should fall. Thus the six days of labour pass, and how joyful is the Sabbath dawn releasing him from such necessary exposure to temptation. He thinks, perhaps, with a sigh of compassionate sorrow of those who, turning the grace of God into licentiousness, will certainly keep a Sabbath to Satan, and use the day of release from worldly business as an especial opportunity for sinning greedily in other ways than those of covetousness and strife; but he goes himself to the house of prayer, under a delightful conviction that in seeking the sanctuary of God he flies from the presence of all his foes.

And so he does; but alas! God has as yet no sanctuary on earth into which those foes cannot enter. There is nothing in consecrated walls to repel them; nor is the most devotional frame of mind that man can bring himself into, a safeguard against their near approach. Rather does our conscientiousness of being on hallowed ground, and its attendant feeling of security, encourage the wily foe to do his boldest and his

worst, where two or three are gathered together, with Christ Himself in the midst, there stands Satan, or some trusty emissary of his, at their right hand, to resist them. We are not left to conjecture whether it be so or not ; our Lord distinctly expresses it, when explaining the parable of the sower : " Then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved." Matt. viii. 12. This, indeed, refers to a case where no true faith exists ; but it proves that when the word is preached, Satan is at hand to render it of no effect ; and where is the Christian who has never realized the presence, even in the hour of real communion with God, of something over which he has had to mourn as being sadly opposed to that perfect spirituality of mind, that joy and peace in believing, which he knows he ought to attain unto ?

We do not rightly estimate the enormous power of the enemy at those times and in those places where he may be considered as suffering an effectual check. A man may know " the plague of his own heart," but he will gain very little in his efforts to subdue it, if he thinks he has that alone to strive against. It is the Devil whom we are told to resist ; and if half the prayers that we put up against the evil of our nature, were directed against him, personally and by name, we should soon experience a relief that is now more hardly and more partially obtained. Inquiry into the character and extent of Satanic power, however successful, is nothing without a vigorous application of the knowledge gained to our individual case : it is to

reconnoiter an enemy whom we do not intend to fight ; and who laughs at the pointing of our telescopes, if not followed up by the pointing of our guns.

There are some who will be constrained to acknowledge, that the surest signal for distress and annoyance in every shape is the attempt to commence or to prosecute some really good work ; that so long as they give their attention to comparative trifles, or occupy themselves in a way productive of no particular advantage, in spiritual things, to themselves or others, they go on with tolerable ease and comfort : but let them attempt an aggressive movement on the Lord's side, and every thing is against them. There is no hinderance so great or so trivial, from the fracture of a limb to the mislaying or soiling of a sheet of paper, but it crosses their path ; no suggestion, from that which leads to most sinful anger, or rebellious murmuring, or dishonouring doubt of God's faithfulness, down to the silliest fancy that can attract the moment's thought, but it will come in their way. Persons, whose habits are the most studious, and whose thoughts need to be more especially abstracted from the passing events of the hour, will find in domestic confusion, the ailments of a family, the perverseness of servants, and the unreasonable encroachments of friends, sufficient to render their progress all but impossible ; and perhaps in the midst of such opposition as it seems bootless to contend against, they are conscious of a tendency within toward that impious murmur, “It is vain to serve God.”

In such a case, we pray for patience ; it is well, for “Ye have need of patience.” We ask more faith : it

is better still, for "All things are possible to him that believeth." We resolve to persevere through every obstruction that can encumber our path; and that is also meet and right, and our bounden duty, "for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." But what a relief should we often experience, what freedom in our onward course, by one fervent, believing, understanding aspiration in these appointed words, "Deliver us from the evil one!"

One of the important uses of watchfulness combined with prayer, is to ascertain what form of supplication is most acceptable before the Lord. Now, Satan is the personal enemy of Christ in a sense, and to an extent that can be applied to no other. He is at once the originator, the director, and the leader of every species of rebellion in heaven and earth. When the Son of God took our nature upon him, and became in fashion as a man, Satan opposed him to his face, tempted, insulted, and finally used to the utmost his permitted power, instigating the treachery of Judas, the malignity of the Jews, and the cruelty of the Romans; throughout the whole narrative of our Lord's suffering sojourn, we trace this accursed spirit, not only in his deeds, but by name: and surely it behooves us to remember all this, and to put honour upon Him who came to destroy the works of the devil, by continually seeking his all-sufficient help against the conquered, but still mighty and dangerous adversary.

It is when we would draw nigh to God, with an earnest appeal against Satan, or persuade others so to do, that we find ourselves most furiously resisted in the

outset, most truly set at liberty in the end. It is when we resolve to fight neither with small or great, but only against him who is the king of the infernal hosts, that he will be discomfited, and his legions thrown into confusion. Not that evil in every shape ought not to be most steadfastly resisted, but he who is pointed out to us by that significant appellation, "Your adversary, the devil," is surely to be singled from the throng of which he is the head, and who all act in subordination to him.

All God's people undergo temptation, though not at all times, yet so very frequently, and in so many different forms, that the presence of an evil influence must be almost continual, and the power of suggesting sinful or foolish imaginations must be widely possessed and exercised among the tempters. The mind has an eye, and before that eye pictures are held, sometimes consisting even of the most ordinary concerns of daily life, accompanied with suggestions of an anxious, an irritating, a covetous, or other evil character, while the Christian is earnestly labouring after a composed spirit, and a collected mind for the service of the sanctuary. Whatever may be his usual occupations, his favourite studies, his prevailing wishes, these are so made use of as to oppose a bar between him and the simply devotional frame after which he longs, often intermixed with distressing doubts, vain speculations, and presumptuous reasonings, connected with the very duty that he is engaged in. What a terrible display should we behold if the mist were suddenly dispelled, and our eyes opened to discern these devils at their

work in the midst of a congregation, who probably consider themselves safely housed from any such intruders, and are therefore deficient in watchfulness against them! One, perchance, is in the pew, suggesting to the hearer disparaging thoughts of the minister, telling him that such a style of preaching is not calculated to profit him, and that he should seek elsewhere an instructor better suited to his case; while another in the pulpit whispers to the preacher that he is not in his proper sphere; he has reaped too little fruit of his labour there to have any warrant for thinking it his destined post of usefulness, and thus the tie on both sides is weakened, and the enemy snatches away, even from the renewed heart, many a precious grain of gospel seed, calculated to increase sixty or a hundred fold, if rightfully received and prayerfully retained. And thus he breaks many a tie that would prove a mutual blessing; inducing a wavering mind and restless habits, often leading the humble, zealous pastor eventually into some snare of popularity, some sphere where personal vanity is gratified at the expense of spiritual mindedness; and he who began by desiring to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, ends by preaching himself, and not Christ Jesus.

“Watch:” for wherever God has given a command or recorded a warning, there will Satan be at work. The first waking thought is often at his suggesting, “A little more slumber, a little more sleep: a little more folding of the hands to sleep.” Prov. vi. 10. The temptation succeeds; and at an hour too late for the due regulation of the day’s employment, the man rises,

dissatisfied with himself. The next step is to make this loss of time a plea for curtailing the seasons of private prayer, or a means of distracting the thoughts while in the act of supplication: nor can the loss of the morning hour so wasted be retrieved during the day. In some characters, this leads to irritability of temper; and too well can the invisible enemies, who are busily employed in following up the first advantage, use a word of unjust harshness to the detriment of many souls. In others, it induces despondency, idleness, or such a dispersion of thoughts as renders the day well nigh blank. It would be endless to follow out the customary plans of those against whom we must watch and pray; the sure way to do so effectually is to bear in mind, that the Bible is Satan's directory, since it shows what God would have his servants to do and to be; and to lead them into paths directly contrary to that revealed will, so that they may grieve the Holy Spirit, and provoke the Lord to leave them to themselves,—which is, indeed, to leave them to Satan,—is the main object of the malignant adversary.

It is not now with the Church as of old, when men might also watch for the visible ministry of angels, as at the pool of Bethesda, “where an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.” John v. 4. Whatever deeds of mercy these ministering spirits may be commissioned to perform, they are hidden from our eyes; but this we know, that

daily, hourly proofs of our heavenly Father's care over his poor children are afforded to every one of us ; and to watch them is a delightful occupation no less than a duty. How can we give thanks even for the small proportion of these mercies that come under our immediate sight, unless we watch for, and note them ? We may be assured that there never is a moment when Satan, succeeding as he so frequently does, in drawing us off from the straight path of holy obedience into some sinful compliance, some unholy word, or evil thought, would not gladly cut short at that instant of time our mortal life, in the hope of gathering our souls with the ungodly. Our preservation in being is an amazing miracle : dangers surround us on every side ; the food we eat, the air we breathe, is pregnant with death. Some deliverances are so very marked and conspicuous, that we are forced to see and to record them : but inconceivably greater are those which are warded off by invisible agency. Surely, it becomes us to observe these things, and audibly to acknowledge them.

In the service of our Church we are taught to unite in a form of open confession of sin ; and if we could call to mind in how many instances the devil has prevailed to tempt us into evil during the past week, how often we have swerved from the right path, and "erred and strayed from God's ways like lost sheep," surely we should desire to make our deep contrition known in the presence, not only of the Lord our God, but also of his enemies who have thus drawn us into rebellion, and of the holy angels who have witnessed alike our

presumptuous transgression and his sparing mercy. There is nothing in this approaching to the blasphemous tenets of Rome, by which the angels are so brought forward as to entrench upon the prerogatives, to usurp, as it were, the attributes of the Most High. It is not to be for a moment supposed that they can read our thoughts, or know more of our secret characters than the Lord may see good to reveal to them, as he represents himself to do in the parables of the sheep and the piece of money ; where friends and neighbours are summoned first to hear of the recovery of what was lost, and then to rejoice that it is found. “*Likewise,*” continues our Lord, “I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.” Luke xv. 10. But those among the ministering spirits who are especially placed about ourselves, as we know them to be, certainly are at least as well aware of our words and actions as any fellow mortal. Our open sins are committed in their presence ; but if they know no more of our contrite sorrow than usually appears in the aspect of a congregation when whispering their confession of those sins to God in public worship, marvelous indeed must it be in their sight that he should so harden our faces !

In like manner, our public thanksgiving—how cold a return must we feel it to be, even when our hearts are warmest, could we but fairly estimate the amount of loving-kindness expended upon us during the lapse of the few days since our last assembling together

“to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands.” We are the only oblivious parties: the devils do not forget how often they have been repulsed, and their best laid plans baffled when they thought to harm us; nor do the holy angels forget the errands of mercy on which they have sped to our succour, help and comfort. Strange must it be to them, when, laden as we are with such incalculable benefits, and met together to unite in proclaiming them,

Hosannas falter on our tongues,
And our devotion dies.

Yet what are these interpositions of Providence in guarding our daily path compared with the interposition of redeeming Love, which snatched our souls out of the jaws of destruction, translated us from the power of Satan to the kingdom of God, and secured to us an inheritance among the saints in light! We utter the name that is above every name, and angels rejoice, and devils shrink. We speak of the mystery of his holy incarnation, and the song of Bethlehem is ready again to burst forth from the lips of the heavenly host; we remind him of his fasting and temptation, and they whose infernal leader was vanquished in that awful field, are ready again to yell out, “We know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.” We talk, alas! with what unmoved faces and feelings! of his agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion, his death and burial, and they who witnessed the anguish endured for us are present to mark the expression of self-abase-

ment and heart-broken penitence of the rebels for whose ransom the Lord of glory stooped so low. We name his resurrection and ascension—can we name them coldly, seeing that when He arose from the dead He led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, even for us, that God might dwell among us? Surely it would somewhat quicken us at least to greater reverence of deportment, greater animation and devotion, to consider what witnesses are among us, and to what they have been witnesses, from the creation of the world to this day.

Yet it is a small matter to be judged of man's or of angel's judgment; he that judgeth is THE LORD. If He be for us, it matters not who else is for, or who may be against us. Angels, principalities, powers, are nothing: we need not to conciliate the favour of the good, nor to depreciate the malice of the evil legions, for He whose we are, and whom we serve, is King and God over all. He bids us watch; he tells us to gird our loins and to trim our lamps, not as trembling slaves, who dread the approach of a severe master, but as honoured guests, expecting the Bridegroom's coming, that we may rejoicingly partake in the marriage festivities. His bride is now a mourning widow; he calls her as a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit, for the enemies of her absent Lord have usurped his dominion, and darkened the earth with heathenism, and polluted it with blood; and in the place where she should sit, a shameless harlot assumes her name, and brands it with the infamy of her own crimes. Well

may the Lamb's wife, bewailing the desolation of His heritage, stand on her tower, and watch for his coming, whose right it is. Then shall ensue the universal reconciliation of all that God made to harmonize together, and which Satan prevailed to disorganize; then shall the tabernacle of God be with man, and HE will dwell among us who is the author, not of confusion, but of peace. Then "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." Dan. vii. 27. Whatever sin has displaced, shall again fall sweetly into its assigned station: Man shall be a merciful, a loving ruler over the inferior creatures, who in their turns shall cease to prey, the strong upon the weak; and he shall again enjoy unrestrained communion with those heavenly beings between whom and himself sin has placed a gulf that neither can pass, except the Lord bridge it over for them. When all things that offend and that do iniquity are gathered out, when the mother of harlots is hurled from her proud seat, where she sits a queen, and now boasts that she is no widow, and shall see no sorrow, and has received her appointed portion, her plagues of death, and mourning, and famine, and utter burning with fire, all coming upon her in one day, then, and not till then, shall the night watch of the Church give place to the glories of a day that knows no going down of the sun.

That this time is not now far off, we have abundant

proofs in the signs that thicken around us. The period that remains is but as an hour, and surely we may watch with the Lord that one hour. All the malignity of Satan that raged against our Master on the fearful night of Gethsemane will now be stirred up for a last effort against his Church: and the trial will be severe, the conflict terrible, even as the issue will certainly be gloriously triumphant. Whatever glimpses we may have caught of the world of spirits in the course of this inquiry, must be turned to good account; for we shall soon need to exercise judgment in the discerning of spirits. The sixth vial, under which there can be no doubt that we now live, is marked by the going forth of the three unclean devils, of whose miracle-working power we are forewarned; and He who has deigned to show us things to come, has not set forth cunningly-devised fables to amuse our fancy, but revealed solemn truths to guide our steps aright, when our path becomes perplexed beyond all that we have known hitherto, or that the experience of the Church has recorded. He that is born after the flesh always persecutes him that is born after the Spirit; but now we shall have the author of all corruption of the flesh persecuting the Lord in His members; and we shall do well to measure, so far as we can, the extent of that power which is coming against us, that we may not only be the better prepared to withstand in the evil day, but also the better able to magnify the glorious might of Him, who, having himself led the way, has given his poor followers a commission to trample un-

der foot all the power of the enemy. How needful, therefore, how precious, are the admonitions of Scripture? "Watch and pray." "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

THE END.





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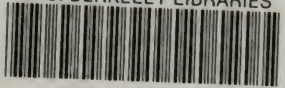
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